

# THE INVESTIGATORS in

## THE MYSTERY OF THE CARDS OF FATE





in

**THE MYSTERY  
OF THE  
CARDS OF FATE**

Milva Summer is a famous astrologer. She believes in divination, writes horoscopes and read tarot cards. One day, the cards of fate give repeated indications that her end is near. In her fear of death, she turns to The Three Investigators and asks the young detectives to protect her from her impending misfortune. Can Jupiter, Pete and Bob defy the predictions of the tarot? Is the astrologer doomed to die?

The Three Investigators  
in  
The Mystery of the Cards of Fate

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## 1. Wheel of Fortune

“Your perception will be put to a test. Today, if you are confronted with events that seem strange to you at first sight, do not hesitate to deal with them consistently.”

Pete Crenshaw lowered the newspaper and tapped with his finger on the column where his daily horoscope was written. “Do you want me to interpret this positively or negatively? What do you think?” The Second Investigator looked at his two friends Jupiter Jones and Bob Andrews sceptically.

That afternoon, after a time-consuming inventory of their archives, The Three Investigators sat at their headquarters, an old mobile home trailer at the salvage yard of Jupiter’s uncle Titus. Pete had just read the astrology column of the *Los Angeles Times*.

Bob peeled a banana and looked over at Pete with an ironic look. “If you do encounter a supernatural apparition today, Pete, you should definitely inform ‘Donna Carrington’—alias Susan Maywood—and praise her divination abilities. She wrote this nonsense!”

“Susan Maywood?” Pete dropped the newspaper. “Who’s that?”

“She’s doing an internship at my father’s editorial office and is writing the daily horoscopes for all twelve zodiacs.”

“Zodiac signs,” Jupe corrected with an important undertone. “Since Ptolemy at the latest, the twelve sections of ecliptic have been called Zodiac signs.”

“Don’t be silly!” Pete turned to Bob with a disbelieving expression on his face. “Are you really sure that an intern is writing horoscopes for the *Los Angeles Times*?” He turned the newspaper page to Jupiter and Bob and pointed to the photo of an older attractive woman winking with a mystical gaze.

Bob nodded. “I must know, right?”

“And why is the photo subtitled ‘Donna Carrington’?” Pete asked. “Is that Susan Maywood’s pen name?”

However, Pete had to wait a bit for the answer, because Bob just shoved the rest of the banana into his mouth. He chewed visibly with pleasure, swallowed and wiped his mouth contentedly before continuing. “The astrologer ‘Donna Carrington’ does not really exist. Many years ago, an editor came up with this name and added a photo of a model.”

“A pretty clever scam for a serious paper like the *Los Angeles Times*!” Jupiter took a close look at the photograph of the supposed astrologer.

“Now stop it!” teased Bob. “Don’t you think there’s a similar thing going on in other newspapers? Besides, who believes the daily horoscopes in the paper? These advices are just for fun, without the slightest truth.”

“Like the weather forecast!” Pete joked and read Bob’s horoscope from today. “You are bursting with self-confidence and do not shy away from any obstacle, however great it may be!”

“There you see it!” Bob triumphed. “Susan has the same sign as me. That’s what my dad told me after her application papers landed on his desk. Consequently, it is entirely logical that she should create an above-average positive horoscope for us. Or rather, think it up. Because the predictions and advices of all twelve zodiac signs originate exclusively from her imagination!”

“Susan is nineteen years old and bursting with original ideas! When I visited my dad in the editorial office last week, I met her. Pretty cool woman. She didn’t talk much, but has a rather dry sense of humour.”

“Hopefully you can give us a taste of it,” Pete replied with anticipation as Jupiter’s eyes glided over his daily horoscope. His forecasts didn’t bode well.

“Susan’s doing her internship at the *Los Angeles Times* Office on a voluntary basis,” Bob explained. “This means she doesn’t get paid for her work.”

“We share this fate with her. After all, we investigate our cases without fee,” Pete interjected dryly.

“Susan has no problem with that,” Bob continued. “She cracked up when the editor asked her to put a few dollars into the cappuccino machine, even though she’d never drink the stuff. She can’t stand that sweet stuff.”

Jupiter made a face. “I can understand that. And how did it end?”

“Instead of telling him this, Susan has created a horoscope for him for the next day.” Bob’s voice took on an ironic tone. ““You should study the characteristics of your colleagues more closely in the future. If you’re bald, you can’t be possibly held responsible for a lost comb!””

“How philosophical!” Pete smiled and stroked his hair. “According to this, Susan occasionally does real life help with her forecasts. Who cares whether these predictions are actually calculated or just made up?”

The First Investigator stretched his legs tiredly and yawned behind his hand. “The wheel of fate! For my part, I doubt that fate can actually be calculated and thus predicted. If this were really the case, it should not be a problem for an experienced astrologer to precisely determine the lottery numbers before they are drawn. My razor-sharp mind, on the other hand, tells me that this can never work according to the laws of logic.”

“This would make a stargazer an instant millionaire and no longer need to create a more or less elaborate horoscope for other people,” Pete added. “He would build a house on his dream island and lie on his lazy back for the rest of his life.”

“Then we can consider ourselves lucky not to rely on these predictions,” Bob joined the discussion. “Hopefully we’ll stick to this point of view when we get into a bad life crisis.”

“How can I understand what you just said?” Pete looked at him questioningly.

“To my knowledge, the main clients of astrologers are people who are in emotional or financial distress,” Bob explained. “Usually they know no other way out than to take a look at the stars. Actually, there is nothing wrong with that. But it becomes dangerous when the forecasts look anything but rosy. That’s a big problem for clients.”

“Assuming they’re so naïve as to really believe that,” Jupiter replied. “I’ll stick to facts only. If I believed in astrology for even a cent, I would reach out for the phone and be prepared for the worst. Because that’s Susan Maywood’s prediction for my day.”

“What’s your horoscope like, Jupe?” Curiously Bob looked at the relevant column of the newspaper.

Jupiter proclaimed with a theatrical voice: ““A call will throw you off track and plunge you into a series of nerve-racking events that can cost you your head and neck.””

Pete’s face darkened. “That doesn’t sound very uplifting. You’re lucky Susan Maywood’s sucking that nonsense out of her fingers. I won’t look into that horoscope corner in the future. My time is far too precious for that!”

The Second Investigator folded the newspaper and threw it demonstratively onto the table. At that moment the phone was ringing loudly and piercingly!



## 2. The Hanged Man

“Are you going to pick up the phone?” Pete asked. “Or do you think disaster can be averted by just ignoring the ringing?”

The First Investigator hesitated for a moment, turned on the loudspeaker, before picking up the phone. “The Three Investigators. Jupiter Jones speaking.”

“Jupiter Jones... As it says on the business card that I hold in my hands here.” They heard a woman’s voice from the loudspeaker. Her age was not easy to tell from the voice. “Is your detective team still taking on cases?”

Jupiter frowned questioningly. “Yeah... How can I help you?”

“My name is Milva Summer. That name certainly won’t mean much to you. But I’ve been assured that you’ll accept insignificant clients as long as the assignments are interesting.”

“No client is insignificant, Mrs Summer,” Jupiter informed the lady. “And if an assignment is interesting, I always decide together with my two partners—”

“Pete Crenshaw and Bob Andrews—yes, I know!” the woman at the other end of the line added a little too violently and in a softer tone added: “That’s how it’s written here on the card.”

She swallowed. “I’m finished. I have exhausted all the means at my disposal, and now I have a feeling that... Uh... I simply can’t do any more.”

“May I ask, where did you get our card from?” Jupiter asked straight out without going into Mrs Summer’s problem.

“From a former client of yours.” Mrs Summer said. “Her name is Abigail Holligan.” The Three Investigators clearly remembered Miss Holligan from *The Mystery of the Voices from Nowhere*.

“Abigail warmly recommended your detective agency. In addition, your successes have been reported in the press several times,” Mrs Summer continued. “Now I am in a predicament. I’ve cried my eyes out and asked around the neighbourhood, but ‘Come In’ hasn’t returned.”

Again, Mrs Summer swallowed. She seemed close to tears.

“‘Come In’?” Jupiter repeated in amazement. “Who or what is that?”

A heart-rending sobbing came out of the loudspeaker. “My cat. The most beautiful, most cuddly and faithful cat on earth. He’s the sweetest thing I have. I have to find him again. It’s tearing my heart apart!”

Bob theatrically twisted his eyes and tapped his forehead with his finger.

“Would you be able to take my assignment?” Mrs Summer asked.

Jupiter faltered for a moment, then he ignored the defensive gestures of his two colleagues. “Uh... Basically yes. But before we go looking for your cat, you should provide us with more information.”

“‘Come In’ is a Carthusian tomcat,” Mrs Summer gushed out. “Unfortunately, not of the noblest origin—but that is not so important. What matters is that I love him and have no quiet minute without him. You have to find him. I’ll pay you any price.”

"One by one," Jupiter tried to slow down the desperate lady. "First, I think I should tell you that we don't charge a fee for our investigation. But that doesn't mean you can compensate us with a bonus after a successful case, ma'am. It would be interesting to find out what does 'Come In' look like?

"He's the most beautiful..."

"... Most cuddly and faithful cat on earth, I know," ended the First Investigator finished repeating the description for Mrs Summers. "But what does the cat look like?"

"He has orange iridescent eyes and a blue-grey fur," she enthused. "Experts would call it steel-blue. The most striking feature of 'Come In', however, is its bushy, jet-black tail, which almost looks as if it had been dipped in paint. A prank of nature! And he might be a little chubby."

"How long have you been missing him?" Jupiter asked.

"It's been seven days," Mrs Summer pressed out painstakingly. "But couldn't we discuss this in person? If you would visit me, it would certainly be of great benefit to your investigation. I have a lot of photos of 'Come In' in every pose imaginable. Based on the snapshots I have taken of him over the years, the search for my darling would certainly be easier for you, wouldn't it?"

"Excellent, Mrs Summer," praised the First Investigator. "When would it suit you?"

"What a question!" it came impulsively out of the loudspeaker. "Every second that goes by is a lost second! Couldn't you come right away? In a manner of speaking, immediately?"

Jupiter took a questioning look over at Pete and Bob. The two hesitated briefly, but then they nodded approvingly and the First Investigator agreed to Mrs Summer's urgent request.

A heavy burden seemed to fall from her soul. "I'm much better now," she confessed, breathing deeply. "When you arrive at the gate of my house, you must ring the bell three times. Then I know it's you."

"What's your address?" Juve inquired.

"I live in Westwood. On Second Street, house number 34," Mrs Summer described her place of residence to the three detectives. "Sunset Boulevard runs west of Beverly Hills through Bel Air; and from there it's just a stone's throw away."

Bob took a quick look at the map of Los Angeles he had attached to the trailer door with tacks and signalled to Juve that the distance from Rocky Beach to Westwood by car was at least half an hour. The First Investigator promised Mrs Summer to arrive at her house in an hour, said goodbye and hung up the phone with a sigh. Pete and Bob demonstratively pulled faces.

"A missing tomcat!" raved the Second Investigator. "The Three Investigators have been waiting a long time for this case. I feel that I have been chosen for crawling through thorny undergrowth and shouting 'Come In' all the time! How could you agree to this case?"

"You should remember that this is not the first time we've looked for a runaway cat," Jupiter recalled. "And back then, that search brought us far more interesting events!"

"Yes, a sarcophagus that contained a whispering mummy!" Bob shouted impulsively and his eyes beamed. He was referring to one of their earlier cases, *The Mystery of the Whispering Mummy*.

Jupiter nodded in agreement. "That's right. And especially when our motto says 'We Investigate Anything!' So what reason could there be for refusing Mrs Summer's case? Especially since Abigail Holligan expressly referred the lady to us?"

"All right," Pete moaned and grabbed his jacket straight up. "Let's get this thing over with. The sooner we start looking for this cat, the more likely we are to track him down and finish the case!"

“Voilà—so be it!” The First Investigator grabbed the car key on the table and threw it to Pete. “Imagine Mrs Summer’s face, Pete, when you find ‘Come In’ and put him in her arms! The lady will shower you with kisses of joy and won’t want to let you go of her hug!”

“I can do without this proof of gratitude, Jupe,” Pete cried spontaneously. “Probably ‘Come In’ was so fed up with her snogging that he preferred to search for his own species and now perhaps romps around in the bush with an attractive Persian cat!”

“Up, up, fellas,” Bob urged to leave. “Speculation leads nowhere. And whatever happens in the front gardens of Westwood, we won’t know unless we’re there!”

Westwood was a distinguished residential area with numerous luxury shops, crossed by Wilshire Boulevard.

When Pete stopped his MG in front of the big gate entrance of house number 34 on Second Street, an astonished whistle escaped him. “Didn’t Mrs Summer referred to herself as one of those insignificant people?” he asked.

Behind the bars of the gate, a wide driveway meandered to an imposing four-storey villa. The spacious garden was adorned by a small lake, on the surface of which bloomed water lilies swam.

“Mrs Summer seems very wealthy,” Jupiter pointed to a flashing brass sign on the stone column of the left gate wing, “The name there at the bell says ‘Milva Summer—Reception by Appointment Only’.”

“Strange that she was so reserved on the phone,” Bob remarked and loosened his safety belt. “What do you think that means?”

Pete switched off the engine, left the car and walked slowly towards the gate, which had a bell and an intercom by the side. Jupe and Bob followed.

“What were we supposed to do? Three rings?” Without waiting for an answer, the Second Investigator pressed the agreed signal and paused uneasily. The seconds passed without anything happening. Jupiter came closer and curiously pressed his face against the bars as his gaze caught on a gorse bush.

“Fellas,” he remarked in a whisper and pointed inconspicuously through the gate. “We’re already under surveillance. There’s a security camera in the bushes!”

Bob took a step back impulsively when a crack sounded from the intercom.

“Yes, please?” it came out dull from the speaker.

“It’s us, Mrs Summer,” the First Investigator announced in a mature tone of voice. “Jupiter Jones, Pete Crenshaw and Bob Andrews.”

“The donkey always calls himself first,” Pete whispered as the gate wings swung to the side and Mrs Summer asked them to drive the MG to the parking lot of her property.

The detectives got back in the car and Pete drove it at walking pace over the winding driveway. Bob marvelled at the marble statues that lined the driveway. They seemed to represent figures and beings from another world.

Out of a sudden, he screamed in horror!

Pete immediately stepped on the brake. “What’s the matter, Bob?”

Bob had turned as white as chalk. He opened the car door and walked slowly towards the bushes. Impulsively Jupiter also got out and followed him. Bob had stopped, stunned and stared into the gorse bush with his eyes wide open.

Jupiter noticed a thin wire rope, then he saw a cat’s paw. For a moment, his breath stopped. He quickly stepped next to Bob. In horror, his gaze glided down the steel-blue fur to a bushy black tail. The cat had a wire loop around its neck and laid motionless on the bush.

It was unmistakably Mrs Summer's missing tomcat 'Come In'!

### 3. The Empress

“I just... I don’t believe it!” Pete was out of the MG and looked with an open mouth at the cruel image that was presented to them in the bushes. The Three Investigators were speechless and turned away from the terrible sight. All the colour was gone from their faces.

“Who is capable of such a cruel act?” Bob swallowed and felt a choke in his throat.

“What are you doing here?” A giant man at least two metres of height came up behind them, his mouth grimly bent. The upper half of his face was covered by the brim of a hat, in his hands he held a spade.

Jupiter did not allow himself to be distracted by the surprising performance. He stepped aside and released the macabre sight in the gorse bush. The man retreated and pressed his hand on his mouth in horror. Then he slowly walked towards the motionless animal.

“This is Mrs Summer’s cat!” the man exclaimed. “My goodness! What has happened?” He immediately reached for the wire to loosen the cat from it.

“One moment, sir!” Jupiter said as he stepped closer. “Perhaps you would be so kind as to first explain to us who you are, what you are doing here and whether you are even authorized to take Mrs Summer’s cat!”

“Excuse me?” The man’s face immediately turned red. “Why are you talking to me like that, you cheeky rascal?”

Jupiter remained calm. “Mrs Summer asked us to come because her cat, she thought, was missing. She has given us an assignment to find the animal—which we did—faster than we expected.”

“Two minutes ago, Mrs Summer opened the gate for us and asked us to park on the forecourt of the villa,” Bob added. “We would have been there by now if I hadn’t looked out of the side window by accident.”

Pete stood in front of the giant and crossed his arms. “And now it’s your turn.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” the giant asked.

“Well,” the Second Investigator said. “You appear here out of nowhere, questioning us. Now I ask you politely—with what right?”

The man turned away from the cat in the bushes and tried to look a little friendlier. “All of this is under the instructions of Mrs Summer. I’m her bodyguard, gardener and caretaker. My name is Art. Daniel Art.”

The man lifted his hat and presented dense blonde hair that he had tied to a plait. “Mrs Summer has informed me of your arrival. And as you yourself told me, you had strict orders to go to the forecourt. You didn’t stick to that. And therefore, to check things out is my right, if I may adapt to your language jargon.” His eyes were on Pete. “But now that I know the reason why you crossed the border, things are different, of course. That’s because what you need to know is that there is one thing Mrs Summer can’t stand.”

“And what would that be?” Jupiter asked provocatively.

“... If something doesn’t happen here according to her instructions,” Mr Art said. “Just as one cog wheel engages in another, everything here has its regular course—strictly according to the textbook. Nothing is left to chance. This property is Mrs Summer’s kingdom and she is the Empress.”

“The Empress?” Bob repeated in disbelief. “What do you mean by that?”

Mr Art lowered his voice as if fearing to be overheard. “She’ll tell you that herself. I’m just doing my job here and making sure things run smoothly. So don’t take it badly that I was just so hard on you. Security is a top priority here.”

“‘Come In’ could have benefited from this,” Pete interjected. “Some bestial animal killer apparently managed to pass through the gate and provocatively put the cat here in the bushes.”

Mr Art twitched his shoulders.

“No doubt this seems to me to be an act of revenge of the worst kind,” Bob added. “The cat was probably poisoned because his body shows no trace of external violence.”

“This will rip Mrs Summer’s heart out. The cat was her everything.”

Mr Art went back to the gorse bush and set about loosening the wire from the branch. Carefully he put the animal’s flabby body over his arms and looked up at the house with a worried look. “We have to break it to her gently. Perhaps it would be better if I took matters into my own hands.”

“Sorry, sir,” Jupiter said decisively. “We’re coming with you. First, we found the cat and second, we’re expected by Mrs Summer.”

“And three, we’re not exactly squeamish!” Bob added. “At least as far as the delivery of bad news is concerned.”

“So, so…” Mr Art did not seem at all pleased with the tenacity of The Three Investigators. “I suspect, rather, that you’re just looking for a reward.”

“Absolutely not!” Pete shouted indignantly. “We do not charge our clients any fees!”

“It’s not necessarily the same thing.” Mr Art turned to leave. “But do what you have to do.”

“We’re detectives, sir,” Jupiter shouted after the man, “and we are always anxious to bring light into the darkness. Therefore, you will understand that a conversation with Mrs Summer will most likely bring us a good deal closer to the perpetrator of this cruel act!”

Instantly Mr Art paused, slowly turned around and pulled the hat deeper into his face. “What are you trying to say?”

The First Investigator visibly enjoyed the attention he received. “We’d like to speak to Mrs Summer about this in person. You don’t have anything against that, do you?”

Without any further explanation, The Three Investigators climbed into Pete’s MG and drove past Mr Art to the spacious forecourt of the villa. This was where Pete parked the car.

As they got out, Mr Art had already reached the front stairs. To spare her the cruel sight, he had put his hat over the cat. At that moment the front door opened and an elderly woman came out. Mr Art said something to her and she screamed out loud. She ran down the stairs to Mr Art.

“I don’t want to be in her shoes now,” Bob thought out loud. And immediately you could hear Mrs Summer sobbing. She stood with Mr Art and hugging the cat.

Pete then stared perplexed in Jupiter’s direction. “What’s gotten into you, Juve?”

The First Investigator in turn looked at the woman, who had to be Mrs Summer according to the law of probability. “Well, well. It is truly a small world! That woman there, with Mr Art, I’ve seen her before!”

“That must be Mrs Milva Summer, the Empress.” Bob closed his eyes. “You mean you have seen her before?”

“Don’t you recognize her?” Jupiter gasped for air. “That woman there is ‘Donna Carrington’—the astrologer who doesn’t really exist!”

## 4. The Sun

Slowly the woman, with the cat in her arms, came closer to The Three Investigators. Big tears ran down her face. "He's dead! And I had no chance to say goodbye to him!" Before she sobbed, her words were hard to understand. "I have misinterpreted all the signs! If I'd just listened a little more into myself, he'd probably still be alive!"

Without a word, Mr Art approached and gave the three detectives a disapproving look. "Do you think it would make sense to call the police, Mrs Summer?"

"Not now, Mr Art. Not now. Please leave us alone." She walked towards the house and directed Jupe, Pete and Bob to follow her, while Mrs Summer's bodyguard headed for a small garden house and disappeared into it.

Still sobbing, Mrs Summer showed the three detectives into the house via the wide front staircase and led them into a splendidly furnished room with a fire place. The reflective parquet floor creaked under her feet as Mrs Summer walked towards a cat basket standing right in front of the fire place. Carefully she put the body of 'Come In' into it, stroking her hand over his shiny fur again and again.

When Jupiter finally cleared her throat in embarrassment, Mrs Summer unfolded a white lace blanket, laid it gently over the animal, and then turned to The Three Investigators.

"Excuse me, please, but everything is turning around," she said softly. "I don't even know what to do. I feel like I'm trapped in an evil dream and all I feel is sadness."

"Would you rather be alone now?" Bob asked sympathetically. "We could come back later."

"No, no!" She said firmly. "It's good to have you here." With a trembling hand she pointed to a round mahogany table with five chairs around. "Why don't you sit down? Can I offer you something to drink? Tea, coffee or lemonade?"

The three detectives waved thanks and took their seats on the elegant baroque chairs. After Mrs Summer sat down, there was silence for a moment.

Jupiter studied the astrologer thoroughly. Her dress looked simple, but expensive, and she had perfect make-up. He could tell that the photo in the horoscope column of the *Los Angeles Times* must have been several years old. Now sitting face to face with her, she made an extremely distinctive impression on The Three Investigators.

"Whoever is responsible for the death of my beloved companion," Mrs Summer broke the silence, "track down this human beast! He or she must be arrested!"

"We'll do our best, ma'am," Jupiter replied, gazing in fascination at the cut diamond on her ring finger, which sparkled in the light of the setting sun. "First of all, please allow me to ask you one question. You look strikingly similar to a person whose face we know from the *Los Angeles Times*. This lady calls herself 'Donna Carrington' and is, according to the newspaper, she is a well-known—"

"Astrologer. I know," Mrs Summer finished the sentence and folded her hands. "And I don't just look like this person. Milva Summer alias 'Donna Carrington' is sitting in front of you."

"So you got yourself a pen name for your profession?" Pete asked cautiously.

“That’s right,” Mrs Summer confessed. “That pen name was the idea of the then publisher of the *Los Angeles Times*. He felt that the name ‘Donna Carrington’ would sell much better and would be more suited as an astrologer than ‘Milva Summer’. That was fourteen years ago. That’s how long I’ve been working for this paper.”

“And since then you’ve been providing horoscopes for the *Los Angeles Times* every day?” Pete asked innocently.

“Without exception. However, my work as an astrologer at the *Los Angeles Times* will be cancelled at the end of this quarter—at my request, of course.”

“Did you cancel the contract?” Bob asked.

Mrs Summer nodded. “That’s right. Although the writing of horoscopes has really grown close to my heart and the collaboration with this newspaper has given me a lot of pleasure, I now feel the urgent desire to turn to an important task. It is occupation that corresponds far more to my own self and is much more important than the already fascinating realm of astrology.”

The First Investigator pricked up his ears. “What could be more exciting for a successful astrologer than reading advice from the stars?”

Mrs Summer leaned back on the chair and slowly closed her eyes. The interesting questions of the three detectives seemed to distract her from her grief. “Tarot cards have revealed to me the mysteries of life. And that’s more, far more, than I could ever capture with astrology analysis.”

“Tarot?” Pete looked up. “Isn’t that a card game?”

XXX

“For the layperson, it could be a card game. But if you take the tarot seriously, you will notice that the symbols on the cards are a reflection of life. Each symbol represents a specific aspect. The pictures speak for themselves and give us the key to one of the many secrets of our existence. Who are we? Why do we live? And what determines the course of our lives?”

Pete stared at the astrologer. “Does that mean that you can look to the future with the help of tarot cards?”

“Tarot has little to do with predicting the future.” Mrs Summer wiped a curl from her face. “The cards only hold a mirror in front of us. They contain a message, a piece of advice that can be followed. The cards show us a picture of what is difficult to put into words and give a voice to everything that lives within us but is not yet clear in our minds. It is up to us to do something with this message and determine its meaning for ourselves. For this reason alone, one cannot compare the laying of the tarot cards with an ordinary card game, because the rules of a game are precisely defined and you can hide your true feelings behind a mask. If you are serious about tarot, you have to drop the mask, look inside and be willing to work on yourself.”

The astrologer looked into the light of the setting sun and dabbed a tear from her cheek with a handkerchief. Then she rose from her chair and walked slowly up and down the room.

“In contrast to words, which usually have only a few meanings, symbols contain many different meanings. Even if the symbols on a card are explained in a certain way, it does not mean that that is their only meaning. Symbols are not like traffic signs. Traffic signs basically show us the direction, but symbols always have more than one meaning. You have to feel the meaning for yourself.”

“And what does that mean in plain language?” Bob asked.

“That you have to make the connections between the tarot symbols and the things that happen in life yourself,” explained Mrs Summer, looking bitterly at the cat basket. “The tarot cards regularly revealed the image of ‘Death’ to me. But I have only related this symbol to



myself. It never occurred to me that my cat's life would be threatened. I have always thought of myself only, without much regard for my immediate surroundings and thus 'Come In'." The astrologer swallowed. "I blame myself for acting so selfishly."

Jupiter stretched his legs to release his inner tension. "Mrs Summer, I don't mean to appear rude, but we should pay our full attention to a much more important fact. There's a ruthless animal killer out there! And apparently, despite the secured entrance gate, he managed to gain access to your property."

"The question is how the intruder managed to put your cat in a wire loop in the bush without being discovered by your bodyguard," Pete added. "After all, he's doing his rounds of supervision on your property, or am I mistaken?"

At that moment, Mrs Summer spun around. "Do I hear the undertone of a suspicion?" She came to the table next to Pete. "Mr Art has my full confidence. He may not be particularly smart, but his loyalty and honesty stood the acid tests. He's loyal to me."

"Acid tests?" Bob asked with interest. "What kind?"

"Well..." Mrs Summer, embarrassed, looked for the right words. "It may not have been the fine English way, but I often deliberately left my jewellery box, wallet and other valuables lying open to test whether Mr Art was able to resist that temptation. He has proven himself brilliantly. He also has an excellent reputation. My tarot readings have only shown positive results. This man is reliable through and through. We can't blame him for not catching the beast that killed 'Come In' and then hanging him up in the bushes. After all, a single person cannot be in two places at the same time."

"What do you mean by that?" Pete asked.

"I had sent Mr Art into town this morning to do some shopping for me. He's been on the road all day. During this period, the unknown person must have invaded my garden and done this terrible deed," Mrs Summer swallowed. "It couldn't have been any other way because when I got the mail out of my mailbox this morning, there was nothing in the bushes yet. I know that for a fact as I would have seen it!"

Now Jupiter rose from his chair and demonstratively crossed his arms. "I for my part stick to real facts, ma'am. And therefore it will be easy for us to catch the murderer of your cat. In a few minutes, we will have the culprit in front of us!"

## 5. The Moon

Unsettled, Mrs Summer took a step back. “How on earth are you gonna do that?”

Jupiter pointed to the window, which gave a view of the extensive garden. “Frankly, I’m surprised you haven’t figured it out yourself. Because according to Mr Art, you’re a personality who leaves nothing to chance.”

“You speak in riddles, young man,” the astrologer replied and looked out the window. “What are you talking about?”

The First Investigator made an arrogant face. “There are security cameras installed all over the property. In my opinion, the camera at the entrance has covered the broad path with the gorse bushes in sight. If we take a look at this morning’s video footage, we are sure to see something revealing.”

“Oh, yes!” Bob made a surprised whistle. “I didn’t think of it myself! Well, what do you say to our genius Jupiter Jones, ma’am? Now we just have to play the recording and the case is solved in no time!”

Mrs Summer didn’t show any emotion, she seemed frozen inside. Nervously, she tugged her handkerchief. “That... I’m afraid that’s not possible,” she stammered, embarrassed.

“What do you mean?” Pete said a little too harshly, for which he received a slight swipe from Jupe.

The astrologer was still motionless. She licked her lips. “I can’t show you the footage from the cameras. That’s simply impossible.”

“Mrs Summer,” the First Investigator started quietly. “You can trust us one hundred percent. If you really want us to help you, we need to get an overview of who was on your property this morning, authorized or not.”

“Or could there be something in the recording that you don’t think is meant for our eyes?” Pete asked with an exaggerated look of innocence.

Mrs Summer reacted very snappily to this remark. “I have nothing to hide, young man. And nothing I can’t present in front of you!”

“Then nothing will stand in the way of our plan, ma’am,” Bob continued persistently. “After all, it’s about the killer of your cat.”

Mrs Summer’s face was filled with helplessness. “Believe me, guys, I’d play you the video right now, but that’s not technically possible. The cameras didn’t record anything!”

“What do you mean?” Jupiter asked in surprise.

“The entire surveillance system on my property isn’t real,’ Mrs Summer revealed. “The cameras are just dummies!”

Jupiter kept his mouth open. “Where... Where’s the joke?” he said dryly.

“Isn’t that obvious? All you have to do is set up the cameras. That’s deterrence enough. I’ll give you an example.” Mrs Summer threw her curly hair back. “Last week some masked members of the ‘Nuclear Power Opponents’ were spotted in our neighbourhood. As you know, this is the underground organization that demonstrates against the new nuclear power plant and feels called upon to cut the power lines in nightly actions. This usually disrupts the power supply for several hours.”

"I read about that," Bob threw in. "With a bolt cutter, it's done in no time. The members of this radical association do not shy away from private households either. They believe that these attacks will persuade politicians and citizens to rethink!"

"That's right," Mrs Summer continued. "Last week, two blocks of streets in the neighbourhood were disrupted. Why do you think my property has been spared such attacks so far?"

"Logically comprehensible and extremely sophisticated," enthused the First Investigator. "The supporters of this organization would not want to be recorded by the apparently functioning cameras during their attacks. All due respect, ma'am. I must admit, I was deceived too."

"If you tell us now that the jewellery on your hands is fake, we'll learn a lot today!" Pete said.

"Your time to make jokes is not appropriately chosen," the astrologer rebuked the Second Investigator with a fragile voice and looked wistfully over to the cat basket. "I realize that if I had a real surveillance system on my premises, we could make a significant step forward, but that doesn't give you the right to make fun of me!"

"Please don't misunderstand us, ma'am," Bob gallantly relented. "Because if those cameras out there are really dummies that only serve the purpose of deterring uninvited visitors, then this is an ingenious and inexpensive method."

"But that won't bring 'Come In' back to life either." Mrs Summer nervously stroked her hair. Meanwhile, the First Investigator pinched his lower lip.

"So we're practically have nothing, so we have to ask you to answer the famous standard question," Pete tried to push the investigation forward.

"And what would that be?" Mrs Summer asked with interest.

"Do you have any enemies? Or is there perhaps a person who wants to take revenge on you?"

"You misjudge me, young man." The astrologer was extremely sensitive to Pete's questions. "I am a peaceful person, a person who tolerates the peculiarities of others and who could be described as an addict to harmony."

"'Live and let live' is my motto, unless I am personally attacked. Cause then, I admit it openly, I can get pretty uncomfortable. But that is rather a rarity. With this I want to express that I always peacefully solve conflicts with other people—if they arise at all. I am in harmony with my self and have not yet seriously clashed with anyone. At least not to the extent that one could speak of hostility or feud."

"This trait, of course, honours you greatly. This makes the list of all possible perpetrators considerably smaller. But if from your point of view that there couldn't have been a motive for taking out 'Come In' in such a cruel way, then I seriously wonder how we could start our investigations," Bob said, while looking over to Jupiter for help.

The First Investigator stood at the window, lost in thought and still pinched his lower lip nervously. The sun had gone down in the meantime and slowly a milky crescent moon appeared in the evening sky through the clouds.

When Mrs Summer lit three altar candles with a match, the First Investigator turned to the astrologer. "Isn't it strange that this unknown person dared to come into your property in broad daylight, even though it is quite clear from the outside that cameras are installed everywhere on the premises?"

"What are you trying to say?" Mrs Summer blew out the match.

"By this I mean that the person who placed the cat in the bushes must have known that your surveillance system was merely a dummy and that he was therefore able to carry out his

wicked deed, virtually undetected!”

“For goodness’ sake!” Instantly Milva Summer became as white as chalk and began to stagger.

Bob hurried over and reached out to the astrologer. “What is it?”

““The Five of Swords’! ... The day before yesterday was ‘The Moon’... Yesterday ‘The Three of Swords’...” Her voice faltered. Mrs Summer jerkily opened the drawer of the table and took a set of tarot cards from it with trembling hands. As if in a trance, she let them slide through her fingers, shuffled the cards and pulled five cards out of the thick pile. She distributed these in the form of a pentagram on the polished table.

Without hesitation, she tapped her finger on the left card and turned it around in a flash. She flinched at the sight of the symbol. The card showed a young man hung upside-down by one leg.

““The Hanged Man’!” Mrs Summer took it. Her facial muscles began to twitch, her hand remained above the card. “Goodness!”

Then her hand moved to the right and stayed motionless over the card for a moment. The three detectives watched her with trepidation. Mrs Summer snapped her fingers and uncovered the second card.

When she saw the card, the astrologer froze and was no longer able to move. Pete withdrew in horror. The card depicted a skeleton of a human being who carried a scythe with him, proclaiming calamity.

“The image of ‘Death’...” Milva Summer barely dared to speak and gritted her teeth together in fear. “We all have to die once... Sometime... You too.” The words just faltered from her mouth. “But I will be next.”

## 6. The Swords

Mrs Summer looked anxiously at Jupiter, Pete and Bob. “The cards don’t lie. Again and again an uncanny power plays the symbol of death into my hands. This has been going on for weeks now!”

Energetically, the astrologer grabbed Jupiter by the arm. “I don’t want to die! My mission on this earth has not yet been accomplished. I still have so many things to do. I’m only fifty years old! Well... Mid-fifty.”

“I really don’t want to offend you, ma’am,” the First Investigator tried to calm the astrologer. “But the fact that you keep picking up the same cards could also be based on pure chance.”

“Six times in a row? Seventy-eight different symbols? Chance has nothing to do with it! That would be mathematically improbable. Also, my horoscope gives gloomy predictions!” Mrs Summer took the card in her hand and pointed to the image of ‘Death’. “My fate is determined. Even if I crawled into the back corner of my house, the Grim Reaper would track me down. I’m on his list. That’s very clear. Misinterpretation on my part is out of the question.”

Jupiter took the tarot card from Mrs Summer’s hand and looked at it closely. “I must confess, ma’am, that I am not entirely familiar with the symbolic language of tarot. What exactly does this card say?”

“... That something is coming to an end. Essentially, it means practising letting go.” Mrs Summer couldn’t hide her excitement. Jupe noticed that her hands were still trembling slightly.

“But when you uncover the card, the answer you are looking for is not yet given. It is only when we deal with ourselves personally that the answer becomes clear.” She took a deep breath. “I have direct access to my feelings. My premonitions coincide with the reading of the tarot and the calculations of my horoscope. I have no choice but to resign myself to my destiny.”

For a few seconds there was devout silence. There was no sound except for a small clock ticking evenly on the mantelpiece. Jupiter sat down at the table again, supported his chin on his hand and looked Mrs Summer in the eye.

“Please allow me an indiscreet question, ma’am. Is there a real reason to think of the end of life or was it only the tarot cards and your horoscope that gave you this information?”

“What do you mean?” The astrologer looked at Jupiter in amazement. “You may understand a lot about criminology, but ‘consciousness development’ seems to be foreign to you. Therefore I say it again—tarot is no trickery, but the development of personal truth! Astrology is also a science to be taken seriously. By the way, to answer your question, I’m in perfect health. My family doctor has even examined me, and from a medical point of view, I have excellent health. What is decisive, however, is what I see and feel. The tarot knows more.”

Mrs Summer pointed to the five cards lying on the table. “My first question was ‘Where did I come from?’ and the answer was in the symbol of ‘The Hanged Man’.”

Again she took a look at the cat basket and could only painstakingly hold back her tears.

Pete had a cold shiver running down his back. The picture of 'The Hanged Man' resembled his find in the gorse bush in a frightening way. Bob also had an uncomfortable feeling in his stomach.

"My second question was 'Where am I going?'" Milva Summer swallowed. "And the answer is from this..." She pointed to the card with the symbol of 'Death'.

The candlelights flickered restlessly and cast eerie shadows on Mrs Summer's face. Jupiter kept a cool head. "And what do the other three cards tell you?"

The astrologer fended this question off with a quick movement of her hand. "Insignificant compared to the first two. What is difficult for me, what makes sense and what means a lot to me, is no longer decisive."

"But I would still be interested," the First Investigator replied stubbornly and looked curiously at the unturned cards.

"Very well. For the question 'What is difficult for me?'," Mrs Summer turned the third card resignedly and she also seemed confirmed internally at the sight of the symbol. "I expected it—'Nine of Swords'." The card showed a person sitting upright in bed with both hands covering the face. Nine swords hung on the wall above it.

"And what does this symbol mean?" Bob wanted to know, although the dark representation of the picture almost spoke for itself.

"This card is interpreted as a station of despair," the astrologer explained. "You understand the consequences and the meanings of your thoughts."

Without hesitation, Mrs Summer turned over the fourth card. Swords were also depicted on it—six of them in a boat with a woman and a child covered in a cloak. A ferryman was rowing the boat to an approaching shore.

"'Six of Swords' for the question of what makes sense. The picture stands for a move or a change of location. I will not be spared. Soon I will have to pass from this world to another."

The First Investigator had a thousand things going through his head. He feverishly considered how he could counter the astrologer's visions of anxiety. But nothing occurred to him—especially since Mrs Summer seemed to be convinced of her inevitable fate of death and could not be influenced by good persuasion.

The fifth and last card that Mrs Summer now uncovered showed an open field where naked people stood out of wooden boxes and worshipped an angel in the clouds blowing a trumpet.

"'Judgement'," Mrs Summer whispered in a barely audible voice. "Transformation and rebirth. The important big goal."

Frightened, she looked at the three detectives. "Do you believe me now?"

Pete didn't like the dark lighting in the fireplace room very much. The sun had long since set. The gloomy prophecies of the tarot cards and the fact that the dead cat was lying with them in the room under a shroud in his basket also gave his body goose bumps. "Can we turn on the light?"

The astrologer didn't respond. She looked intently at the card pentagram with the five symbols. When she didn't answer a repetition of the question again, Jupe got up from his chair and went towards the door to look for the light switch. In the darkness he scanned the area next to the door frame. When his fingertips found the toggle switch and he was about to turn on the light, he screamed in horror!

A hairy claw pressed on his hand!

## 7. The Hermit

“Let go of me!” With all his might Jupiter tried to release his hand from the grip. He hit the toggle switch and bright light flooded the room.

“Mr Art!” the First Investigator said in surprise. “I just wanted to turn on the lights!”

Only now did the bodyguard’s hand let Jupiter go. “And that’s why you’re sneaking around the room?”

“I didn’t find the switch right away,” Jupiter replied, panting. The horror had driven into his limbs.

“Stop, stop!” Mrs Summer clapped her hands energetically and walked quickly towards Jupiter. “You don’t have to justify yourself to Mr Art. In my house, I run the show.”

She then gave her bodyguard a look of reproach. “It is you who is wandering around my house and frightening my visitors. These three boys enjoy absolute hospitality and can move freely here! And now, please be so kind and bring me my mobile phone. I have another important conversation to make.”

Mr Art left the lounge. Juve gave Pete and Bob a sign that it was time for them to leave. When Mrs Summer noticed this, she took a nervous look at the cat basket and then at the three detectives.

“I must apologize for my behaviour,” she said. “I should never have laid the tarot while you were here. That was very rash. But I felt something like an inner compulsion—and helplessness. ‘Come In’s’ death is extremely close to my heart. I still can’t believe people are capable of such cruel acts. Attacking defenceless animals is cruel!”

“Will you bury the cat in the garden, ma’am?” Bob asked.

“Yes,” Mrs Summer said. “But first, I’ll have his body examined. I need to know what poison he was given. It may be possible to draw conclusions about the perpetrator. That’s why I need to talk to Professor Steed on the phone. He is a veterinarian, a true expert in this field. As soon as he finds something out, I’ll get in touch with you. I can assume that you will pursue this case?”

“Of course, ma’am.” The First Investigator smiled confidently at Mrs Summer. “You can count on us all the way.”

“This is truly the best news I’ve heard today.” Mrs Summer tried to return the smile and led Jupiter, Pete and Bob through the large lobby to the front door.

At that moment, Mr Art hurried down the stairs from the first floor. In his hand he held the mobile phone. “Your phone, Mrs Summer! Shall I take the gentlemen to their car?”

“Thank you, I’ll do it myself.” The astrologer took the phone and opened the front door.

When they stepped outside, Bob stopped and looked at the strange sculptures and figures in the garden, which he had already noticed on his way here. Irradiated by bright lights, they only really came into effect now. Surprised, he pointed to an angel carved out of marble.

“The sculpture there, ma’am, is identical to the angel on your tarot card!”

Mrs Summer nodded. “And not just him. The other six figures are also based on the symbols of the tarot. The works come from a friend of mine, a sculptor. Aren’t they beautiful? Look there, this is the ‘Queen of Wands’, or here on the stairs are ‘The Lovers’.” She proudly presented the artistic works.

“But what fascinates me most is the sculpture of ‘The Hermit’. I personally feel very closely connected to him. Every person brings something new into the world that has not existed before and will not exist without him. If we miss this, we feel abandoned. This is his message.”

Jupiter, Pete and Bob marvelled in awe at the bearded hermit at the edge of the pond. In his hand he held a bronze lantern in which the light of a small light bulb shimmered. The three of them almost felt like they were in a fantasy world. Only the dummy cameras of the surveillance system made them aware that they were in the present.

After Bob and Pete had said goodbye to the astrologer and got into the MG, Jupiter turned again to Mrs Summer. “How’s it going with Mr Art,” he wanted to know. “Is he privy to the secret of the dummy cameras?”

“Of course,” she replied. “I wouldn’t see any point in lying to people in my immediate vicinity. And even if I had done it in this case, Daniel Art isn’t exactly a clever fox, but even he would have found out about this fraud. After all, it would be his job to change the videotapes.”

When Jupiter was about to get in the car, Mrs Summer gently held him back. “You have to protect me... I don’t want to die yet.”

“We’ll do our best, ma’am.” When he pressed her hand to say goodbye, he felt with concern that she was still trembling.

Pete started the engine, the astrologer turned to go. The First Investigator watched her until she went back into the house. Then he sat back and they drove in silence along the winding path to the gate. Automatically, the wings swung to the side and Pete steered the car onto the road.

“If you ask me, that’s enough for today! I don’t feel like dealing with dying. First the cat and then all those death symbols on the tarot cards. What’s too much is too much!” The Second Investigator stepped on the accelerator.

“Be glad you’re not in Milva Summer’s shoes, Pete.” Bob yawned. “Man, hopefully tonight I won’t dream of skeletons beheading me with a scythe!”

“Calm down, fellas. It seems to me that Mrs Summer is in serious trouble. And we should feel obligated to get her out of it. Her bodyguard may have muscles, otherwise...” Jupiter raised his shoulders.

“If by trouble you mean the loss of her cat and that we should set out to track down the one responsible, I agree with you, Jupe. But I’m not willing to listen to any more of her tarot explanations. It is guaranteed to give me a sleepless night tonight.” Energetic and with screeching tyres, Pete steered the car through a bend.

“I suggest we postpone this topic until tomorrow,” Jupiter tried to calm Pete’s heated mind. “There are some questions that are unanswered and I need to know what’s behind them!”



## 8. Strength

That afternoon, Bob Andrews was last to arrive at Headquarters. He let himself plop into the armchair and wiped the sweat off his forehead. For Jupiter, it was a clear sign that Bob must have travelled a long way by bicycle. This also meant that Bob had already done some initial research on the Milva Summer case. Jupiter was not wrong.

"I must confess, fellas, yesterday's tarot session of our astrologer made a lasting impression on me. I couldn't let go of that subject. That's why I made a detour to the library earlier to find out more." Before Bob continued with his explanations, he thirstily reached for the lemonade bottle on the table and poured the glass full to the brim. He drank the soda in one go.

"I was admittedly amazed at how many books and newspaper reports are listed in the computer catalogue under the keyword 'tarot'," Bob said. "This subject seems to be more widespread than I had suspected."

Pete grabbed his head in disbelief. "Oh, no. Now you're going to start with this horror stuff! Mrs Summer merely instructed us to track down her cat's killer. And he'll be somewhere in the immediate vicinity. In any case, we won't find him in one of those tarot worlds that has 'sharp swords', 'skeletons with scythes' and 'hermits'! The poor woman can no longer think of anything else, she lives surrounded by threatening symbols, which now also announced her death!

"Which you're not entirely wrong, Pete," Bob said. "But wait and see what I've found worth knowing about tarot cards. Then maybe you'll change your mind."

"But only maybe," Pete replied, unconvinced. "Let's hear it."

Bob poured himself a second glass of lemonade. "The first tarot cards were made during the Renaissance. They were created between 1430 and 1460 in northern Italy for large princely houses."

"Clear so far," teased Pete. "Go on!"

Bob wouldn't let that upset him. "Today, the most common deck of tarot cards has 78 cards divided into two parts—the Major Arcana of 22 cards and the Minor Arcana of 56 cards. The Minor Arcana are further divided into four suits of 14 cards each. Each card has its own picture, symbol, colours and story.

"The 78 cards bring together a wealth of typical motifs, characters and stages of life, covering various periods of cultural history, from the Renaissance back to the Middle Ages to Greco-Roman antiquity and even to the time of the early Egyptians."

"Now you're giving us history lessons too," Pete nagged. "Isn't there any more recent information on the cards?"

"Interesting question, Pete," Bob continued in his report. "Even today, millions of people in America and Europe use the tarot. However, it differs considerably from fortune-telling and oracle techniques. Rather, tarot is the 'magic of the moment'. It lives from the encounter with chance and therefore the current situation in which these chances occur plays an important role."

"I can understand potatoes with fried egg," Pete interrupted the lecture again. "What has chance got to do with magic?"

"It's actually quite simple," Bob tried to make himself understood. "The 'magic of the moment' refers to the thoughts and ideas that the picture triggers in the reader after it has been drawn by chance while laying the cards."

"Explained in an exemplary manner!" praised Jupiter. "Since the beginning of this century, science and art have also been working with chance, that is, with what happens accidentally and unintentionally. If, for example, one drops an ink blob onto a sheet of paper, folds this paper and then opens it again, the ink blob would have spread to create a new figure by chance. Each viewer will see something different in this new figure."

"Exactly," Bob confirmed. "And the same goes for interpreting the tarot cards. After I ask a question, I draw a card and try to read the answer from the card. The pictures and symbols only have the task to let the reader interpret the answer from his perspective. The reader should trust his intuition and go with the meanings that feel right for him. Sure, there are traditional interpretations of what each card means, but the ability to discern meaning lies within the reader's immediate emotional reaction and intuition."

"The cards don't tell you anything that you haven't already felt or known inside you. Becoming aware of what has long slumbered within you is the power of the tarot symbols. It's like holding up a mirror to yourself so that you can access your subconscious mind and tap into the wisdom and answers that lives in us all."

Pete had listened to Bob's explanations with interest. "This all sounds pretty confusing. I might as well ask myself the question: 'Do I really want to handle this case?' I draw a card—it's the ferryman. That tells me I should leave Headquarters as soon as possible."

"And how do you explain Mrs Summer's inner conviction that her life clock is about to expire and what she gets from the cards always seem to agree with her?"

"I can't make sense of it," Bob said, shrugging his shoulders.

"And another inconsistency has been in my head since yesterday," the First Investigator gave the discussion a new direction. "How can it be that Milva Summer claims to have been writing horoscopes for the *Los Angeles Times* under the pseudonym 'Donna Carrington' for fourteen years, even though we know from certain sources that they are actually invented by a trainee? The longer I think about it, the weirder it seems to me. Somebody's not telling the truth here."

Pete took a sceptical look over at Bob. "Couldn't it be that Susan Maywood just wanted to make herself interesting to you and took you for a ride?"

Bob shook his head. "There is no mistake. I visited Susan in the editorial office and saw with my own eyes how she hammered the forecasts into the computer! She insisted that this should never be made public, but I saw it!"

"Calm down, Bob, we believe you!" Pete unfolded the *Los Angeles Times* from the previous day, which was still on the table, looked at the photograph of the astrologer and read his horoscope from the previous day again. "Your perception will be put to a test. Today, if you are confronted with events that seem strange to you at first sight, do not hesitate to deal with them consistently."

Thoughtfully, he lowered the paper. "I'm really not superstitious, fellas, but this forecast, whoever made it, has actually come true. How can it be?"

XXX

"I noticed that yesterday," Jupiter whispered. "Strictly speaking, that statement is quite general and could also apply to thousands of other readers."

"But not for my horoscope," Bob smiled and took the paper from Pete's hands. "'You are bursting with self-confidence and do not shy away from any obstacle, however great it may be!'"

Jupe thought hard. "What was the direct wording of my horoscope, Bob?"

"A call will throw you off track and plunge you into a series of nerve-racking events that can cost you your head and neck." Bob read from the paper.

Pete stared at his two detective partners in amazement. "How do you explain that?"

"Frankly, this prediction sounds far more accurate than both of yours," Jupiter remarked. "I must confess that I was truly relieved to receive the phone call from Mrs Summer yesterday. Because, according to my horoscope, one phone call yesterday heralds disaster. But what it turned out to be was for us to help Mrs Summer avert a disaster, which is of course an honour for us!"

"But we must not ignore the fact that after our experience yesterday, this horoscope could also apply to Mrs Summer. Yesterday her call to ask us to look for her missing cat led to the nerve-wracking events that affected her so much."

"And what does that tell us?" Pete wanted to know.

"The laws of logic are suspended, fellas," Jupiter announced. "All the prophecies in our horoscope seem to have been fulfilled to a certain extent, even though we had unanimously decided not to believe those advices! With that I want to express that this astrology analysis is similar to interpreting tarot cards. It's all a matter of interpretation."

"As it is, we should focus on the essentials. We are going to find out why Susan Maywood told you that she writes the horoscopes using the pseudonym 'Donna Carrington' and a photo of Milva Summer, when Mrs Summer herself claims that she writes them." The First Investigator took a questioning look around. "Something's wrong. I can feel it in my bones."

Bob got up from his armchair and took a look at the calendar. "Then I suggest we consult my dad. He certainly knows more about this issue, else he can find out more in order to help us in this matter. Unfortunately, he can only help us tomorrow at the earliest. He's currently on an assignment in San Francisco, and will only be coming back tonight."

Jupe reached for a pair of scissors, cut out the horoscope column from the newspaper and attached it to the pin board. "There's no hurry about the horoscopes. I'm just curious about the true background of the story because, frankly, I can't imagine Mrs Summer lying to us."

"Lie or truth? That is the question here," Pete philosophized. "After all you've taught me today, the answer for me is already clear."

"What would that be?" Jupiter asked in surprise.

"It's all a matter of interpretation."

## 9. The World

At the following noon, right after school, The Three Investigators arrived in Mr Andrews's office at the *Los Angeles Times*. Bob briefly described the situation to his father before coming to their specific query. "You can count on our discretion one hundred percent, Dad, but we really need to know—who is behind the pseudonym 'Donna Carrington'?"

Mr Andrews then picked up a blunt pencil in his hand and pushed it into a large sharpener, which also served as a paperweight on his desk. "Your client—Mrs Milva Summer—for exactly fourteen years and four months."

The three detectives looked at each other confused.

"And why is Susan Maywood now doing the horoscopes instead of Mrs Summer?" Bob asked as he watched his father turn the sharpener's crank.

"There are indirect contractual reasons for this." Mr Andrews took the sharpened pencil and tapped its tip with his fingertip.

"What do you mean by 'indirect'?" Bob asked.

Bob's father hesitated. "You want to know exactly what?"

The three detectives nodded at the same time.

"You mustn't think I don't trust you. The matter is only extremely spicy and quite unpleasant for everyone involved—if not embarrassing."

"Now you've completely made us curious." Bob looked at his father with a sore face. "So, Dad, what's going on?"

"You must promise not to tell anyone about this. The matter must not be made public under any circumstances." Mr Andrews looked at Bob, Jupiter and Pete one by one.

The three detectives nodded.

"As you know, the *Los Angeles Times* has always been a serious newspaper that takes its discerning readers seriously. Until fifteen years ago, our editorial team was of the opinion that a daily horoscope could considerably damage the reputation of our newspaper. Back then astrology was seriously questioned by astronomers.

"Over the years, opinions changed. Some even wanted to be able to prove that there is at least a spark of truth in astrology, and now astrology is even recognized by many people as a science. At that right time, an astrologer who had excellent references and was also an extremely attractive person was introduced to the publisher."

"Mrs Milva Summer," Pete remarked.

"That's how it is," Mr Andrews continued. "The publisher decided to go with the times and signed an exclusive contract with her. Then she was given the name 'Donna Carrington' because it was believed that it would sell better than her real name, Milva Summer."

Mr Andrews cleared his throat. "Well, what can I say? The astrologer agreed to all this and over the years wrote the horoscopes with increasing success. As her predictions were mostly accurate, she became a celebrity. She received thousands of letters from readers and fans, even from important personalities who wanted her to create personal horoscopes for them. It was incredible, because within a very short time, the lady had become a millionaire."

"Good for her," Jupiter interjected. "Then what went wrong?"

"It started last year," Mr Andrews explained. "Mrs Summer gradually made it a habit not to deliver her twelve daily horoscopes on time, as they had to be at the typesetters at least five hours before the newspaper appeared. In addition, she did not adhere to the contract."

"How did she not adhere to the contract, Dad?" Bob asked.

"The horoscopes became more and more scarce, the texts repeated and finally she didn't even deliver her horoscopes anymore."

"Did she give a reason for that?" Pete wanted to know.

"Yes, and not just one!" Mr Andrews sighed. "What do you think she blamed it on? Sometimes it was a migraine attack and then it was an important visit to the doctor. One day she even said stiffly and firmly that the courier driver, who was supposed to deliver the envelope with the horoscopes to the newspaper, was unable to find our office!"

The Second Investigator grinned. "It reminds me of my repertoire of excuses when I haven't done my homework!"

"You see it with humour. But the editorial staff wasn't laughing at all. Any persuasion on the part of the editor did not bring the slightest success. Mrs Summer vowed to get better, but after a few days she again got us into scheduling difficulties and she kept coming up with new excuses. Then one day, her unreliability forced the newspaper to make a decision."

"What was that decision, Dad?" Bob asked.

Mr Andrews rose from his leather armchair. "Fourteen days ago, it was a Tuesday, her horoscopes did not arrive even after the editorial deadline. Since Mrs Summer could not be reached by phone or fax, the management had only one choice—either her column for the next day was dropped or someone had to be found quickly within the next half hour to create twelve different horoscopes. And if possible, written in the distinctive style of the astrologer."

"Awesome!" Jupe exclaimed. "This is what Susan Maywood took care of, right?"

"That's how it was," Mr Andrews said. "And in my opinion, she passed that test with flying colours."

"Could you perhaps explain to me why Susan believes that the photograph of Mrs Summer above the horoscope column is just the image of some model?" Jupiter asked.

Mr Andrews hesitated for a moment. "When Susan was commissioned to write the horoscopes, she told us that she had worked on something similar at the *California Chronicle* where she had her first internship last year. Mrs Arrow, our editor who is in charge of the horoscope column among other things, did not respond to that. Susan presumably drew the conclusion that we also used the photo of a model for our horoscope column."

"And how did Mrs Summer react to all this?" Jupiter asked.

"Again with unreliability, Jupiter. Because after she had apologized to the editors with a lame excuse for the breakdown, she messed up one more time and Susan Maywood had to step in again. The publisher then made the final decision from this. The exclusive contract with Mrs Summer expires at the end of this quarter and will not be renewed."

"Does anyone know the real reason why Mrs Summer has been having trouble keeping to the schedule over the last few weeks?" Pete asked.

"We could only speculate about that. But I know that a few months ago there were some unpleasant arguments between her and the publisher. Mrs Summer gambled for a higher fee. However, she did not succeed. Then she threatened to back out of the contract. The *Los Angeles Times*, however, was not prepared to respond to her demands and indicated to her that they might not be dependent on her."

Mr Andrews took a short break. "I suppose that's been hard on her. The feeling of being dispensable hit her hard and scratched her self-confidence. That was clearly noticeable

because shortly afterwards, the first delays occurred. And if you don't meet deadlines, you're always in trouble."

"Truly spoken, Mr Andrews," Jupiter replied. "Has the publisher found a suitable replacement yet?"

"As far as I know, negotiations are underway with several other astrologers," Mr Andrews said.

Bob's father took a nervous look at his schedule. "I don't mean to be rude, guys, but in a few minutes there'll be an editorial meeting. We're doing a cover story on the 'Nuclear Power Opponents'. This association is currently making headlines everywhere. I have to hurry now or I'll be late for the meeting."

"I get it, Dad." Bob patted his father on the shoulder thankfully. "You've helped us a lot with your information."

"You're welcome. But remember our deal!" Mr Andrews escorted the three to the lift.

When the lift doors opened and Mr Andrews hastily said goodbye and disappeared behind one of the doors of the long corridor.

Pete pressed the button and the lift slowly descended to the ground floor. "Well, who would have thought? Neither Susan nor Mrs Summer really lied. Why do we always have to see a mystery in everything? Now we've stuck our noses in Mrs Summer's private matters and exposed a mid-level tragedy. How do you think it happened?"

Jupiter gave no answer. He had started to pinch his lower lip again. Something in the story didn't add up. He racked his brains and hoped for some sort of ideas, but they did not come.

## 10. The Lovers

After their visit to the *Los Angeles Times* office, the three detectives went back to their headquarters. When they entered the trailer and closed the door, the telephone rang. Jupe jumped on the phone and picked it up. Instantly his face lit up, and he pressed the loudspeaker button. The voice from the loudspeaker unmistakably belonged to Mrs Summer. She seemed very excited and stammered for the right words.

"It's unbelievable! I can't believe it..." She exclaimed. "There are things between heaven and earth... It must be a dream. I am totally at a loss for words..."

"Mrs Summer, slow and steady," the First Investigator tried to calm her down. "What happened?"

"I can't say that on the phone. You wouldn't believe me anyway!" The tone of her voice changed several times, then she took control of herself again. "You must come and see for yourself that I am not suffering from delusion! Please hurry!" The loudspeaker cracked. The line was disconnected.

"What might have happened again?" Pete wondered. "And what kind of way is that to hang up the phone without waiting for a response? How can she expect us to leave everything behind and go to her immediately?"

"Surely Mrs Summer's concern is only a trivial matter!" Jupiter said. "But I can go to Westwood with Bob. Can we borrow your car?"

"Nothing doing! Over my dead body!" Pete pulled his bunch of keys out of his pocket and jingled provocatively in front of Jupiter's face. "I'm going with you!"

This time Bob pressed the agreed three-ring bell signal at Mrs Summer's gate, while Pete and Jupe waited impatiently in the MG.

After just a few seconds, the gate swung to the side and Pete drove at walking speed to the gravel-scattered forecourt. Leaving the car, they saw Mr Art standing on the shore of the pond, fishing out withered water lilies with a net. He briefly raised his hand and then turned back to his work. At that moment, the front door opened and Mrs Summer waved Jupiter, Bob and Pete to her with a glowing face. She seemed very excited, with no trace of grief.

"I'm glad you're here! Quick, come in!" Her eyes were glowing. "This is the happiest day of my life!" She hurried ahead with quick steps and led the three curious detectives into the fireplace room. The thick velvet curtains were closed, no sunbeam came into the room. You could barely see your hand in front of your eyes.

Mrs Summer put her finger on her lips. "Please just whisper. We might scare him." Quietly she went to a floor lamp and pulled the lighting cord. Weak light shone on the cat basket. "A miracle has happened..."

Jupiter, Pete and Bob could hardly believe their eyes! In the cat basket lay, stretched out lengthwise, a tomcat with a steel blue coat. His pitch-black tail moved sluggishly back and forth. This was, without a doubt, Mrs Summer's beloved tomcat 'Come In', whose apparent death caused her to cry her eyes out yesterday!

As the three detectives cautiously approached the cat basket, the cat slowly turned his head and looked at the visitors with a dazed look. Jupiter discovered two adhesive plasters on

his body. One was stuck to the lower part of the neck, the other across the belly.

“How is that possible?” Jupiter asked, stunned and bent down to the basket together with Pete and Bob. The Second Investigator reached out his hand to stroke the cat.

“Please don’t touch him!” hiss Mrs Summer. “‘Come In’ needs absolute protection. His blood circulation is unstable and Professor Steed is not yet able to say whether his cell tissue has suffered any damage. But the main thing is that my darling lives! We have to be very careful.”

“He was dead!” Pete gasped. “We saw that with our own eyes! How could it be?”

“I’ll tell you in the next room. We should let ‘Come In’ rest undisturbed now. I just had to show him to you guys.” Mrs Summer sharpened her lips and threw a kiss at her cat. “I love him! Now life has a meaning for me again! We’ll drink to that with champagne. Come with me!”

Even before the three detectives could have responded to the suggestion, the astrologer light-footedly pranced out of the room. Astonished, they followed her into the lobby, where four champagne glasses and an ice-cold bottle in the cooler were already waiting on a side table.

She uncorked the champagne bottle with a trained grip and a loud bang and poured it.

Bob waved thankfully. “Please, not for us!”

Mrs Summer wouldn’t be put off. “A little sip—a thimble full. Just symbolic. We have something to celebrate!” She handed the glasses to the three detectives.

“Cheers!”

Jupiter sipped on his glass while his thinking apparatus rotated feverishly. Thoughtfully, he looked at the astrologer. “Are you 100% sure that the tomcat next door is really your ‘Come In’? Please don’t misunderstand me, but the situation forces me to ask you this question.”

Mrs Summer put down her champagne glass. “Your doubts are understandable, Jupiter. But you’ll soon be convinced. I couldn’t even believe that this medical miracle was possible. But when Professor Steed brought my darling back to me this afternoon, I was taught a lesson. At first, of course, I sensed a tasteless deception when he stood in front of me with ‘Come In’ in his basket. I assumed he was trying to pass off a strikingly similar cat on me. ‘Come In’ has a few distinctive features. So after taking a closer look at him, there was no reason for me to doubt the truth of the professor’s account. Professor Steed breathed new life into ‘Come In’ after a terrible suffocation!”

“How was that supposed to work?” Pete asked. “Dead is dead. And you can’t bring the dead back to life.”

“Just so. Professor Steed has played a trick on nature.” Mrs Summer reached for the champagne bottle and poured herself another glass. “A long time ago, scientists succeeded in freezing animals and reviving them after thawing. This is not a world first and has been reported about several times in the press. The only major difference is that these animals were still alive before freezing.

“Professor Steed, on the other hand, has passed this hurdle. ‘Come in’ is living proof! And my darling has had unimaginable luck in misfortune. The insane attacker suffocated him with a plastic bag instead of poisoning him, else Professor Steed couldn’t have saved ‘Come In’. The fact that his blood and tissue had not been damaged by external influences gave him a second life.”

“But you said earlier that I should not touch him because his cell tissue might be damaged,” Pete mentioned with a sceptical undertone. “So which is which then?”



“Both of them!” Mrs Summer was obviously in a champagne mood and had another glass. “Professor Steed is only at the beginning of his research. As far as I understood him, the dosage of the drug he had to inject into the body before freezing might have been a little too high. This would mean that the cell tissue would have to regenerate. But this can only be determined after a few days. I’m not too well versed with the medical details.”

The First Investigator remained suspicious. “This thing is too fantastic for me to believe so easily. May we have another look at this cat, Mrs Summer?”

“I don’t think that’s such a good idea,” Mrs Summer replied.

“Are you really sure you can trust Professor Steed?” Jupiter questioned Mrs Summer’s judgement again.

At that moment, an electronic gong sounded in the lobby. Mrs Summer went to the intercom and pushed a button. “Yes, please?”

A man’s voice came out of the speaker. “Sorry I’m late, Mrs Summer, but I got held up in the lab!”

“It doesn’t matter. I’ll open the gate.” The astrologer pressed a small toggle switch and turned to the three detectives. “Now you can see for yourselves whether the professor can be trusted or not.” She pointed out the window.

“In a short while, he’ll be coming up the driveway!”

## 11. The Magician

Professor Steed was tall and slim. His rough and wrinkled hand, which he held out to Mrs Summer in greeting, suggested old age.

Jupe suspected that the veterinarian had retired some time ago. The most striking thing about him was his huge crooked nose, in which Pete saw at a distance and that reminded him of a bird of prey. The professor approached the entrance with his medical case with him.

When he saw The Three Investigators, he gave them a disapproving look, before turning to the astrologer. "You have visitors, Mrs Summer? That wasn't part of the deal."

"These are the boys who discovered 'Come In' in the gorse bush—Jupiter, Pete and Bob. We just toasted the return to life together." The astrologer pointed to the champagne. "May I pour you a drink, too?"

"Not for me. Thank you. I still have to drive." Professor Steed studied the three in depth. "Mrs Summer is lucky to have called you. If the cat had remained undiscovered for a longer time, I could not have done anything more for him. After all, I'm not a magician, I'm just a veterinarian."

"Well, don't sell yourself short, Professor," the astrologer replied with elation. "In my eyes, you are a magician. A true genius! The world will shower you with awards as soon as you publish your results."

"There's still a long way to go," the professor said. "'Come In's' resuscitation is just the tip of the iceberg. How's he doing?"

"He's still very exhausted. But he's already had a bowl of milk."

"Let's go check on him." The professor reached for his medical case and headed towards the fireplace room.

"May we come with you?" Jupiter called out to him, interested.

"If you keep quiet, I have no objection," Professor Steed said. "Afterwards, however, I would like to discuss something with Mrs Summer in private."

"Sure thing!" The First Investigator winked at his two colleagues inconspicuously. Then they followed the veterinarian into the fireplace room. Mrs Summer joined them.

As they entered the room, Professor Steed went straight to the cat basket. Then he pointed to the curtains. "Please be so kind as to let the light in. It's going to make 'Come In' feel alive." He took a finger-long plastic instrument from his case and gently pushed it into the cat's ear. "This thermometer measures the temperature in a few seconds. If there's no fever, your cat is recovering well."

'Come In' let the procedure go by motionless and just blinked in fright as Bob drew the tight curtains aside.

"And?" With an anxious expression Mrs Summer tried to take a look at the digital display of the thermometer.

Professor Steed was confident. "We can breathe a sigh of relief. He probably got through the worst."

"I'll never forget that! How can I ever repay you?" Mrs Summer's eyelids fluttered excitedly as her hand nervously played at the earring. "We must inform the press immediately! This is the greatest advancement medicine has ever made!"

“The time isn’t right for that, Mrs Summer. Numerous analyses have yet to be evaluated and a number of lab findings have to be examined before this gets to the public eye.” Professor Steed searched his case for a syringe and took a blood sample from the sluggishly dozing tomcat with a trained grip. “I expect him to be back on its feet in a few days. We can be confident.”

Jupiter took a curious look in the medical case. Right on top was a small parcel that aroused his interest. He read ‘Barbiturol’ on the label. That reminded him of something, but of what? At the same moment, the professor hastily closed the case.

The astrologer looked at her watch with a nervous look. She suddenly seemed very worried. Restlessly she went to the window, which opened the view to the garden, stood on her toes and looked hard outside. She snapped her fingers nervously.

“What is it, Mrs Summer?” Bob asked as he stepped next to her. “Is something wrong?”

“That was a mistake...” she murmured. “I shouldn’t have done that...”

Jupiter and Pete listened on. And Professor Steed also became attentive. He stood up and walked towards Mrs Summer questioningly. “Is there a problem?”

Desperation spread across Mrs Summer’s face as she laboriously started to speak. “I have committed something foolish, something really stupid, Professor. I can’t explain what got into me.”

“What have you done?” the professor asked.

“After ‘Come In’ was back and he laid here in front of me in his basket, I cried with joy, you know?” The astrologer struggled again with the tears. “I had so much to thank you for. You’ve given my life a meaning again. You have made my heart float again and you have given me new confidence through your extraordinary abilities! It had to be made public!”

Professor Steed became as white as chalk. “What do you mean?”

She lowered her head, bit her lower lip and swallowed.

“What do you mean?” he repeated in a raised voice.

“I informed *Washington Globe Magazine*...”

The vet startled. “You have... What?”

“... And asked for the reporter to be here at five o’clock for an exclusive interview.” Her voice trembled.

“You’re kidding!” Professor Steed took a worried look out the window. “What did you tell them?”

“Nothing yet. I kept a pretty low profile on the phone. I wanted this surprise in your presence.” Mrs Summer desperately rubbed her hands together. “I just wanted to do you a favour, professor. I thought a little publicity might not damage your reputation—especially now that you have come up with a sensational discovery!”

Professor Steed grabbed his head in disbelief and ran nervously up and down the fireplace room. “Stay calm... Stay calm. What do we do now? I need to think...”

Mrs Summer chewed her nails desperately and suddenly jumped, startled.

“What is it?” Bob asked.

“I heard a car,” Mrs Summer replied. “That’ll be the reporter!”

Just when she had spoken the words, the electronic gong sounded from the lobby. Seeking help, she turned to the three detectives. “What do we do now?”

## 12. The Devil

Professor Steed gasped with excitement. "Get that reporter out of here! I have nothing to tell him. They're all the same! They smell a story and go over dead bodies!"

"Shh..." Mrs Summer put her finger on her lips. "Please think of 'Come In'."

Again the gong sounded from the lobby, several times in a row.

"Pushy bunch," the professor cried. "They besiege you like bees to honey!"

Jupiter turned to the hostess. "Would you mind if I took charge of this, ma'am?"

"Don't get involved!" the vet interrupted. "You're no match for those reporters! When you get involved in a conversation, they dig so much out of you that you can't even remember what you told them."

"Professor Steed, you don't know Jupiter Jones," Pete defended the First Investigator. "Let him do it. I guarantee you he'll despatch the reporter through the intercom in seconds."

"I don't think that's a good idea!" The professor scoffed.

"But I do! And in my house, I decide! Come along, Jupiter." Mrs Summer rushed with brisk steps into the lobby and led Jupiter to the intercom.

The First Investigator took a deep breath once, pressed the button and then spoke in a deep, misaligned voice: "Yes? Can I help you?"

"Mike Hanson from *Washington Globe Magazine*. I have an appointment with Mrs Summer."

"Mrs Summer's not here, I'm afraid, Mr Hanson. She had to go attend a meeting at the Carrington Hotel." While Jupiter was speaking into the intercom, he wouldn't let Mrs Summer out of his sight. But she remained unmoved. She just seemed anxious to get rid of the reporter.

"Carrington Hotel?" echoed the reporter. "Never heard of it. Where exactly is that?"

Pete and Bob pressed their hands on their mouths so as not to blow out loud. Jupiter was in his element. "I'm not sure where it is, Mr Hanson. May I give Mrs Summer a message?"

"I can only tell her in person."

"Then try your luck at the Carrington Hotel. Good day!" First Investigator disconnected. "Well, what do you say now?"

"Great, Juve! Excellent!" Pete grinned broadly. "Mike Hanson will be busy for the next few hours!"

"Don't be fooled," Professor Steed suspected. "The man will use his mobile phone to get in touch with the editorial staff and find out in no time that you have took him for a ride, and then he'll be at the gate again."

"I'm inconsolable, Professor. This wouldn't have happened without my indiscretion. Let's hope that we have got rid of the *Washington Globe Magazine*." The astrologer drove her hand over her forehead, exhausted. "All the excitement has hit me hard on the head. Would you like a glass of champagne now? There's still a little sip in the bottle."

The vet shook his head. "We still have to talk about the contract, Mrs Summer. I brought the documents with me. You should take another look at the contract. But perhaps it would be better to wait until your visitors have left."

“We’re practically out of the house, ma’am,” the First Investigator announced, throwing a curious glance at Professor Steed. “Of course, we will continue our investigation into ‘Come In’s’ attacker. And as soon as we find something out, we’ll get back to you. But there is one more question—were you aware that by calling *Washington Globe Magazine* you were also risking your own reputation as a serious astrologer?”

Mrs Summer paused and poured the rest of the champagne into her glass. “Could you be a little more specific, please?”

“Well,” the First Investigator explained, “if you had let the reporter into the house earlier, he would have recognized you immediately. After all, you are a well-known personality, your photo has been published for years in the *Los Angeles Times*. Through the sensational report and the photos of Professor Steed, the resurrected tomcat and his owner, your face would have appeared in the *Washington Globe Magazine*. Millions of readers would have learned that the famous astrologer of the *Los Angeles Times* is actually called Milva Summer and hides behind the pseudonym ‘Donna Carrington’!

“I could imagine that would be a slap in the face for many of your admirers and fans. Astrological calculations published under a false name do not inspire much confidence and inevitably cast doubt on your credibility.”

“Very flattering that you’re worried about my reputation,” Mrs Summer replied, slightly tipsy. “But aren’t you exaggerating a bit? I don’t see anything reprehensible about a pen name and my fans certainly don’t either. Only the *Los Angeles Times* could suffer an image loss. After all, this newspaper never misses an opportunity to underline its serious reporting. They should take a good look at themselves. After all, the pen name was their idea!”

Bob frowned. “It almost sounds like you want revenge on the *Los Angeles Times*.”

“‘Revenge’ is not the term I associate with the *Los Angeles Times*. But I have to admit that lately there have been some unpleasant arguments between the publisher and me. Well, we broke up by mutual agreement. But, like I said, the contract expires at the end of the quarter. That’s all I have to say in this matter. I am not dependent on the *Times*. I can also publish my horoscopes in another newspaper. I may have to give up the pen name of ‘Donna Carrington’ for legal reasons, but I assume that they will give me the name with a kiss. After all, it’s in their interest to avoid the scandal I mentioned.”

“Then let’s not keep you any longer, Mrs Summer,” Jupiter said. “And please excuse my curiosity.”

“Hold on! Wait!” Professor Steed walked quickly towards the three of them. “I must insist that you remain silent about all that is going on in this house. And above all, not a word about my medical intervention for ‘Come In’! Neither to your parents nor to your friends, is that clear? And certainly not to the press! Can we count on you to do that?” His gaze seemed to want to pierce The Three Investigators.

“What our clients entrust to us, we always keep to ourselves,” Jupiter said, disgusted. “Mrs Summer can trust us absolutely.”

The First Investigator reached out to the astrologer to say goodbye. But she waved to them to hold on and turned instead to the professor. “Professor, could you wait for me in the lounge? I’ll be with you in a minute.”

Professor Steed grumbled something incomprehensible and, without saying goodbye to the three detectives, went through the door next to the fireplace room.

Mrs Summer turned to Jupe, Bob and Pete. “Professor Steed and I have some business to discuss. That won’t take long. It would be a great pleasure for me if you would stay a moment longer. Afterwards I have an important appointment in the city, but before that I

would like to lay the tarot cards for you as a token of appreciation. It only takes fifteen minutes—at the most! Just to get a taste of it, so to speak. What do you think of that?”

“A personal reading from you?” Bob’s eyes were beaming. “Wow! That sounds good!”

“Let’s wait and see!” she proclaimed mysteriously. “And what about you two?”

“We’re in!” called Jupiter and Pete.

Mrs Summer smiled and reached for a file on the green marble table next to the coat rack. This she handed to Jupiter. “In the meantime, take a look inside. In it I have collected all the newspaper reports that have appeared about me in the last fourteen years.”

The First Investigator took the file and sat on a chair in the lobby, while the astrologer went into the lounge.

### 13. The Chariot

Professor Steed seemed to still find the matter with the reporter of the *Washington Globe Magazine* hard to digest. Every word he said could be understood through the door.

"That was irresponsible, Mrs Summer! Your actions would have put me in a tight spot. You have to know that the press is not to be trifled with."

"I can only keep apologizing to you, Professor."

"Hmm. Well... Let's forget about it and get down to business," the professor said. A rustle of paper came out of the lounge. "I've already prepared everything. All you have to do is to sign here and agree to it. Then everything would be in place."

"I have a few more questions, though," Mrs Summer replied sceptically. "After all, it's a decision you only make once in your life."

"You can change your mind at any time and withdraw from the contract. You're probably thinking about the financial risk?"

"I'm not interested in money, Professor, I've had enough of that—more than I can spend in a lifetime. No, my concerns are about the moral aspects."

"Are we going to get sentimental now?"

"Well, Professor, I must say..."

Professor Steed laughed cynically. "What's the problem then?"

For a moment, there was silence. Jupiter, Pete and Bob pricked up their ears.

"Have you ever wondered what happens to our soul after we die?" Mrs Summer spoke so softly that her words were hard to understand.

"As far as I am concerned, it is part of the body so it either rots with it in the earth or burned in the crematorium."

"That's probably the scientific view of it," the astrologer said, "but you ignore the faith that—"

"Don't get so pathetic," Professor Steed remarked sarcastically. "I don't care about religions, Mrs Summer. I'm a realist. And I have to be very surprised that you suddenly belong to the group of believers. But then I don't understand why you authorized me to bring your cat back to life."

"What do you believe in? That your soul reaches paradise after death? It can't be so beautiful there! Just look at your cat! He's lying there licking his fur! He feels comfortable on Earth—truly the most beautiful place in the universe!"

"You shouldn't hesitate long, ma'am. 'Come In' is living proof that I've managed to outwit nature! Should the predictions of tarot cards actually come true, which I as a medical professional very much doubt, then secure your return ticket with your signature. Your destiny is in your hands."

The three detectives heard a chair move, followed by the creaking of the parquet floorboards. One of the two people in the lounge walked restlessly up and down.

Paper rustled again. "For freezing the body, I charge \$125,000, Mrs Summer—of which \$40,000 is for preparing the body," the professor said.

"What do you do when you prepare the body?"

“Your body will be connected to a heart-lung machine in the lab so your brain doesn’t get damaged. The body is then cooled to 4 degrees Celsius from the inside by applying small ice crystals from the outside and by pumping in a saline solution.” The professor cleared his throat. “Shall I continue?”

“I’m asking for it.”

The three detectives were freezing down the spine in the warm lobby.

“I have added an anti-freeze to the saline solution to prevent you from complete freezing, otherwise there would be serious cell and tissue damage in your body, and we want to prevent that, don’t we?” This is where Professor Steed escaped a giggle. “I will then transport your body to a freezer where you will have to wait about twenty-four hours. When you are in this almost frozen state, I will add my formula to the saline solution, which will bring you back to life when it is thawed.”

“\$125,000?” the astrologer asked thoughtfully.

“No additional charges. Half of this is due when the contract is concluded,” the professor clarified. “The other half of the agreed sum would be deposited in a bank account set up especially for this purpose. With your signature, you grant me access to this account to withdraw the sum in case of your death.”

“And how long do I have to think about it?”

“It’s entirely up to you. Tomorrow afternoon, however, I’m flying to New York for three weeks for a medical convention,” Professor Steed said. “However, if something should happen to you in the meantime, contrary to expectations, you must know one thing—without your signature on this form, you cannot be helped.”

“I don’t quite understand,” Mrs Summer replied. “If you’re in New York, you couldn’t take care of my freezing anyway—even if I had signed it.”

“Well, as soon as you sign the agreement to the freeze, I’ll tie this band to your wrist.” The three of them heard a light “pling” as if a coin were falling on the table.

“It is clear from this metal band that you don’t want to be buried after death, but deep-frozen. Whoever is in attendance must call the number on the metal band immediately so that a designated ambulance can take your body to one of the nearest labs. I will administer my formula to you later.”

“Are there any labs besides yours on Walker Street?” the astrologer asked.

“For sure. Many, actually.” A cough interrupted Professor Steed’s lecture. “In Florida, Michigan and even here in Los Angeles. If you really die, ma’am, and if I’m not near you, you’ll be temporarily stored in one of those labs until I get back.

“In fact, one of these days, you should come and visit my lab and see the facilities for yourself,” the professor suggested. “My lab is at number 9, Walker Street, which is just a short distance from your place here.”

“Number 9 Walker Street... Sure, I’ll be delighted to,” Mrs Summer said. “One more question... Are the frozen dead in the other labs also waiting for resurrection?”

“Certainly. There are many societies whose members hope to live on after death. That’s why they choose deep-frozen sleep. But no scientist has yet been able to conquer death. Although I’m a veterinarian, I have discovered the procedure that does so. What I managed to do with the cat, Mrs Summer, I can do with a human.”

There was a pause in the conversation. Then the professor said: “Well, how about it?”

“I will question the cards,” the astrologer decided firmly. “Give me a minute.”

Jupiter, Pete and Bob clearly heard a drawer opened.

Time passed. Nothing was to be heard, except the occasional, restless throat of the veterinary surgeon. Finally, Mrs Summer interrupted the silence. “So be it.”



“What’s that supposed to mean?” the professor asked.

“When we focus our inner drives and outer goals and free ourselves from distorted images, the magic of ‘The Magician’ is confirmed on a new level.”

“What do you mean by that?” Professor Steed asked impatiently.

“It’s not me who wants to tell you something, it’s the card that’s giving me a message.”

“And what is that card over there? What do you see in it?”

“This is ‘The Chariot’. The guiding principle of this card is ‘to get a stagnant situation moving again and overcome all the challenges that may be in the path’,” Mrs Summer said with confidence. “Hand me your pen, Professor. I want you to have my signature.”

## 14. Death

Jupiter feverishly considered whether he should intervene. The way in which the veterinarian urged the astrologer to sign appeared more than questionable to him. However, it was her own decision!

The turning of a key in the door lock made the three detectives startle. Mr Art stepped into the lobby and looked around searching. "Where's Mrs Summer and the professor?"

Pretending to be busy, Jupiter leafed through the astrologer's press folder and casually pointed to the lounge. The bodyguard was about to knock on the door when it was opened from the inside. Mrs Summer appeared in the doorway. She came into the lobby and checked her make-up in a wall mirror.

Mr Art stepped next to her and said: "I don't want to alarm you, ma'am. But there's a reporter lurking outside the gate for some time now. I saw his press pass and told him that you were not available. Nevertheless, he could not be turned away. Now he's waiting in his car. He seems to have a lot of time."

"Excuse me?" Now Professor Steed also came into the lobby. "I told you so in the first place. You just can't simply shake him off! They are all like that!"

Mrs Summer desperately clasped her hands. "This is all my fault! What am I doing? I have an appointment at 6 pm! How am I supposed to get out unnoticed?"

Pete rose from a chair and headed for the coat rack. "We can trick him." Without asking permission, he reached for a white fur coat and a wide-brimmed sun hat. "One of us put these on, get in my car and I'll lead the reporter on a wild-goose chase."

The astrologer agreed immediately. "Excellent! It could work out. If I give you my sunglasses and put a silk scarf in front of your face, we can hoodwink this Mike Hanson."

"Who's gonna be the decoy?" Pete asked. "How about you, Bob? You look like you have the right size. Jupe won't fit, of course."

"Wait a minute!" Bob snapped. "It's your idea, so why don't you be the decoy?"

"I'm driving," Pete replied. "You know I'm the better driver and we have to lure the reporter away. As Mrs Summer, you sit at the back and Jupe and I will be in front as your bodyguards."

"Of all the things I have to do..." Bob sighed. "You had better lose him fast so I can get out of this disguise."

"What do you say to this, Professor?" Mrs Summer asked.

The veterinarian's expression did not change. "Maybe it could work. You should still turn your face away. Especially when you pass the exit! These eagle-eyed reporters are extremely cunning." Professor Steed took a cautious look out of the window, while the astrologer handed Bob her mirrored sunglasses.

Jupiter still held the press folder in his hand and watched the events idly. Just as he was about to close the folder, his gaze got caught by a strange photograph. At second glance, his heart began to beat faster. He made sure that none of the others looked in his direction, then his fingers slipped into the plastic folder and quickly let the photo disappear into his shirt pocket. Suddenly, a hand lay on his shoulder from behind and drove the sweat onto his forehead.

“Well, Jupe, what do you think of our Bob?” Pete grinned. “Isn’t he like Mrs Summer? The male fans will be at his feet!”

Jupe breathed a sigh of relief. Groaning, he rose with the press folder in his hand.

Bob urged haste. “I feel very uncomfortable in this outfit. Let’s get moving. I hope that the upcoming wild goose chase will make up for that.”

Get ready, fellas,” Pete said. “Now we’re going to show this press man what Pete Crenshaw can do!”

“He’s right,” agreed Professor Steed. “The sooner you lure that reporter away, the better!”

Jupiter stayed cool. “We do this exclusively for the pleasure of Mrs Summer, Professor. She’s an extraordinary person.” He put the press folder back on the table.

“Will it be alright for you if we bring your clothing items back tomorrow, ma’am?” Bob asked. “Who knows how long Hanson will be on our heels?”

“That is a designer coat, be careful with it!” The astrologer raised her index finger to warn Bob. “Hang it on a hanger at home!”

“I promise!” Bob turned to go.

Mrs Summer had a glimpse of her watch. “Gracious! My appointment! I can’t miss it! Hopefully this Hanson will fall for the disguise!” She quickly put another black silk scarf on Bob.

“I owe it to you, boys! Of course I will make up for the promised tarot session. The best is first thing tomorrow morning. And one more thing—call me on my mobile phone as soon as you’ve lost Hanson.” She shoved a small business card into Pete’s coat pocket. Then she waved to Mr Art. “As soon as the boys are gone, please drive my car out of the garage. Is the tank full?”

“It’s all right, Mrs Summer. Want me to drive you?”

“Absolutely not! ‘Come In’ must not be left alone. I’ll be back in two hours! Give him another bowl of milk, please.”

The astrologer opened the front door for Jupiter, Pete and Bob. Demonstratively she crossed both fingers. “Well, good luck! As soon as your car gets to the gate, I’ll open it.”

The three of them walked slowly down the front stairs towards the car. Pete drove off with Jupe in front passenger seat and Bob at the back seat. As agreed, The electric gate opened as they approached it.

Jupiter spotted the reporter from *Washington Globe Magazine* immediately. He sat waiting inside an older, rather rusty model of a BMW parked in a side street opposite Mrs Summer’s gate. When the MG left the exit, he noticed. He started the engine immediately afterwards. Pete stepped on it.

“Yes! He’s following us!” Jupiter sat in the back and looked out of the rear window.

“The guy’s gonna want to make sure he’s following the right car!” Bob shouted excitedly. “I’m sure he’ll try to come close, Pete! Don’t give him the chance. I may resemble Mrs Summer at a distance, but we don’t want to take any risks!”

Pete didn’t turn his eyes off the road. “Can you see his face, Jupe?”

“No!” Jupe said, looking back. “He’s too far away. Let him come closer. Let’s play cat-and-mouse with him!”

“First we steer towards the highway!” The Second Investigator shifted from fourth to third gear, always careful to keep a safe distance.

Bob pointed through the windshield. “Step on it, Pete! The traffic light at the intersection is about to turn red! Come on!”

“Yes, yes!” He stepped on the accelerator and the car hissed across the intersection.

Jupiter puffed. "That was just right!"

"Where is he?" Pete took a quick look in the rear view mirror. "I can't see him."

"Here he comes!" Jupiter exclaimed. "He got through the intersection as well! Faster, Pete! He's catching up!"

"Don't drive me crazy, Jupe!" Pete activated the turn signal and drove onto the highway.

"I just wonder why he is so persistent?" Bob asked. "He can't even know what this is about. Mrs Summer didn't give him any details."

"Please ask me something easier," Jupiter replied.

"No problem, Jupe." Bob turned his head back. "How long do you think we're gonna play this game with the reporter? An hour? Two?"

"At least until we can be sure Mrs Summer has left her house," The Second Investigator said as he continued to focus on driving.

He only ever let the obtrusive pursuer approach at about ten metres, then he accelerated, changed lanes or meandered between other cars.

After about forty-five minutes later, the reporter seemed to be fed up with the game. The BMW let the distance to the MG increase. Through the rear window, Jupiter could still see him for a while, then he was out of sight.

Pete activated the turn signal. "I'm driving up there to the picnic area, fellas."

"I've got to take off this coat," Bob said. "I'll sweat myself to death in this fur! Besides, I could use a refreshment."

Pete steered the MG into the parking lot. "Coke for everyone! The kiosk there is open. I'll buy you a round." He got out and headed to the kiosk.

Bob took off Mrs Summer's coat and carefully placed it on the back seat. He added the sun hat and the silk scarf. He then leaned against the bonnet of the car as he stared thoughtfully into the sky. Slowly dusk set in.

Pete came back after a moment. In his hands were three beverage cans. "Not exactly environmentally friendly, but better than nothing."

"The whole thing is pretty crazy." Bob said. "I'd like to relax and not talk about Mrs Summer, 'Come In' and this crazy professor. Want some music?"

Bob sat down in the driver's seat and looked for a suitable radio channel. He chose a soft rock station and a song from Richard Marx came up from the car speakers. He turned the volume a little louder and joined his friends at the rest area.

"This astrologer still fascinates me with her cat craze, Jupe." Pete opened the Coke can with a hiss. "In our detective career, we have already experienced really weird things, but this Milva Summer case is the crowning glory!" Thirsty, he took a gulp of the drink.

"Our perception is not in tune with our logic," Jupiter said. "'Come In's' resurrection is a paradox! The day before yesterday we saw with our own eyes how the tomcat was dead in the bushes, and yet since noon today he is lying alive again in his cat basket and licking his fur. And that only because a certain Professor Steed came across a formula by means of which he can bring the dead back to life after freezing them. I don't believe this!"

"For many people, however, this idea does not seem so far-fetched. Recently I read an interesting newspaper article about it." Bob let himself sink into the grass. "The freezing of the deceased is actually considered desirable by a growing number of people. They believe that scientific progress will one day make it possible to cheat death in this way."

"It's known as cryonics." The First Investigator joined Bob on the lawn. "Cryonics is the low-temperature freezing and storage of a human corpse, with the hope that resurrection may be possible with future technology."

“So far, this has not been successful yet. But in recent times there have been more and more write-ups progress in this direction. I think we’ll have to get used to the fact that we’re heading for a new era. We’ll probably be faced with even more fantastic events.”

“And what are you trying to tell us?” Bob chewed on a blade of grass.

“‘Come In’ is among the living again, and only the professor knows how he succeeded in doing it. As long as we have not proven Professor Steed to be a charlatan, we must assume that he actually has the formula for resurrecting life. Sooner or later he will have to prove his results to the world. Until then, we could consider him to be a saviour of mankind, a weirdo or a fraud. It doesn’t change anything. As it is, we have not yet fulfilled our mission—the killer of the cat has not yet been found.”

“Even if we don’t get to him, Jupe, the main thing is that Mrs Summer has found her life courage again. After all, ‘Come In’ is her most precious companion! Man, she was so happy!” Pete couldn’t resist a grin and mimicked Mrs Summer’s voice: “‘Come In’, ‘Come In’... The most beautiful, most cuddly and faithful cat on earth...”

Suddenly, the car radio cut off the music for an announcement: “We interrupt our music programme for an important announcement. It has just been reported that the famous astrologer, Milva Summer, known in public as ‘Donna Carrington’, died in a fatal accident about thirty minutes ago on the highway southwest of Los Angeles. Several witnesses reported that her car had gone off the road down a slope and crashed into a tree. The astrologer died at the scene of the accident.”

## 15. The Star

“Witnesses reported that a man who claimed to be a doctor brought the victim to his car to drive her to the hospital. No reports from the nearby hospitals have been received so far.

“The police are therefore looking for a man in his seventies. He is lean and about six feet tall. At the time of the incident he was wearing a black loden coat, and seen driving a black Buick. Anyone with relevant information is requested to contact the nearest police station.”

Bob turned off the radio. “What’s going on? For goodness’ sake, what happened?”

“I don’t believe it.” Pete was barely able to speak. “The prophecy of the tarot cards... ‘Death’... The prediction has indeed come true. She knew it!”

Bob’s mind went round in circles. “Professor Steed... I bet he took Milva Summer to his lab!”

Pete trembled like a leaf. “That means she actually signed the contract. And so \$125,000...”

“That’s what it looks like.” Jupiter pinched his lower lip obsessively.

“We have to call the police!” Pete shouted upset. “At least we know who the person they’re looking for.”

The First Investigator kept his nerve. “Do you have a road directory in the car, Pete?”

“Yes, in the glove box. Why do you ask?”

“Walker Street... Remember?” Jupiter said. “I’m sure you also heard the professor giving his lab’s address to Mrs Summer—9 Walker Street!”

Bob frowned. “It’s slowly dawning on me, Juve. You want to go to the lion’s den?”

“I beg your pardon?” Pete exclaimed. “Am I hearing right? You guys are nuts! Crazy and totally insane! Please say I misunderstood you. Say I heard it wrongly. Say it!”

Jupiter and Bob looked at Pete and remained silent.

“Oh, goodness!” Pete then realized that it was true. “You want to see this lab... Forget it! It’ll be security tight. Zero chance of getting in there.”

“I’d like to believe that, Pete. But not until we’re in front of it.” The First Investigator laid his hand on Pete’s shoulder.

In the meantime Bob had fished the road directory out of the glove box. Now he pointed to a specific spot—Walker Street—I’ve found it. And do you know what? That’s not even ten blocks from Mrs Summer’s house! I estimate it will take us about thirty minutes to go there.”

“By then it will be dark. You can’t even see anything now.” The Second Investigator was persistent. “Can’t we discuss this again?”

“Sure thing,” Jupiter said calmly. “On the way to Walker Street. Get behind the wheel, Pete!”

He reluctantly started the engine, turned around and drove back on the highway. But he still did not agree with the enterprising spirit of his friends.

“The police are asking the people to help,” Pete continued his objection. “We can’t just ignore that. We must at least give Chief Reynolds a call.” Reynolds was the Chief of Police of the Rocky Beach Police Department of whom The Three Investigators had a good rapport with.

“So?” Jupiter didn’t like it when someone interfered with his elaborate concepts and thoughts, with the possibility of messing up everything. “We don’t have any evidence at all, Pete. We don’t even know if the professor gave us his real name or if he actually set up a lab with a freezer in Walker Street! As long as we cannot answer any of these questions with certainty, I think it is not the time to inform the police.”

Bob agreed. “How do you think they’d react if we bring ‘Come In’ into the picture?” he said. “Even Chief Reynolds would think we’re nuts!”

“And what happened to Milva Summer?” Jupiter recalled. “When I think about it, it’s freezing down my spine.”

About twenty-five minutes later, Pete turned off the highway back to the Westwood neighbourhood. Bob used the road directory to direct Pete to Walker Street.

“We’re almost there,” Bob said. “We’ll be going past Mrs Summer’s house. Imagine that we are back where we started today.”

As Pete was approaching Mrs Summer’s house, suddenly he exclaimed: “Look! That’s the BMW! Darn! I have clean forgotten about the reporter! I never would have guessed that he came back to wait for Mrs Summer!”

“Be calm,” Bob suggested. “Just drive on and don’t look at him. He may not notice us.”

Pete calmly drove past the BMW which was parked at the same side street opposite Mrs Summer’s house. A short while later, they reached Walker Street.

House number 9 was a grey, rectangular concrete structure that already seemed to have the aura of an ice block from the outside. There was a small road leading to a white metal door which was poorly lit.

“Go on and park in one of the side streets, Pete. If the professor gets here, he should not see your car right away.” Jupiter took a look at the concrete structure through the rear window. Suddenly he blinked as the headlights of a car approached them from behind.

“Hey! Look who’s here!” Juve exclaimed. “Yup, the reporter noticed us! Just keep cool. Our priority now is to investigate the professor’s lab. Perhaps we might get him to help us after all.”

The BMW came up and parked right behind them. The three of them took a deep breath, as the man got out of his car.

“Hi!” the man said as he approached Pete’s car.

“Good evening, sir,” Jupiter greeted him. “So you found us again.”

The man, who might be in his mid-forties, had bright blue eyes and was nervously stroking his bald head.

“I’m a little confused,” the man said. “Earlier, I was convinced that Mrs Summer was in your car. That’s why I’ve been following you. And I have to say, you’ve really made me sweat. But that’s what my profession brings with it. I’m Mike Hanson, reporter for *Washington Globe Magazine*.

“Well, now I hear... Did you hear that? Well, the message just came through my mobile phone. Mrs Summer was killed in a car crash an hour ago.”

“We already know that,” Jupiter said dryly. “And when I think about it, you’ve come at just the right time. Do you have a camera with you?”

“In my car,” Mr Hanson replied. “It’s a digital camera with time, date and other features.”

“Great!” Jupiter said. “I suggest you to take the camera with you. I cannot promise you anything, but there is a possibility that you will be able to present a journalistic treat to your

readers in your next issue—if you would like to accompany us...”

“Mrs Summer also promised me a journalistic treat five hours ago,” Mr Hanson replied. “She called me at the editorial office and personally asked me to go to her house. She wanted to present me with something that the world has never seen before! A medical revolution—the victory over death! She was really keen to get the article on the *Globe*! But there has never been an encounter between us...”

“You know the body of Mrs Summer was taken away?” Jupiter asked, always looking around suspiciously.

“According to the current reports, yes,” Mr Hanson replied.

The First Investigator pointed to the concrete structure. “We assume she’s in there!”

“In there? What makes you think of that?”

Jupiter pulled out his wallet and took a small card from it, which he handed over to Mr Hanson. It said:



“Investigators?” the reporter quoted in amazement. “What’s all this about? And what makes you think that Mrs Summer’s body is in that house over there?”

“We can sort all this out later, Mr Hanson,” Bob said. “Get your camera and let’s get to work.”

Within a very short time, they had found a small white board that said: ‘Prof. E. Steed—Veterinary Surgeon’.

They rang the bell but there were no response.

Bob pointed his flashlight at a small window. It was about one metre away from a basement door. When he leaned slightly against it, he discovered to his surprise that it was just squeezed shut, but not locked. Bob pushed it open and climbed in.



## 16. Judgement

“Bob!” Pete hissed into the window. “Is everything all right?”

Shortly afterwards a flashlight lit up from the inside.

“As far as I can tell, yes! I’m here in a toilet. Come along, fellas!”

After making sure the air was clear, Juve, Pete and Mr Hanson climbed through the narrow opening. The First Investigator had to pull in his stomach and only under the greatest of efforts did he manage to squeeze his full body into the toilet.

Pete giggled. “It’s okay if you’d got stuck in the window, as we could have continued the investigation on our own.”

“Save your humour for later, Pete,” Jupiter countered with a serious facial expression. “I strongly suspect there’s not much to laugh about in this lab.”

Silently, the three of them and Mr Hanson left the toilet. The cone of light from Bob’s flashlight, which fell ghostly over the bare walls, showed them the way. From the narrow long corridor in which they were at, several metal doors branched off. None of the doors had any name plates or labels on them. Jupiter carefully pushed down a handle, but the door was locked. Going forward, they tried opening the doors along the way, but they were also locked.

“Hopefully there’s no motion detector in this house that alerts the police,” Mr Hanson said with hushed whispers. “I’m risking my job with this break-in, you guys understand?”

“You could have waited outside,” Pete said. He was overly sensitive and nerves were tense to the extreme.

Jupiter raised his hand in warning. He heard a soft, barely perceptible rumble. It sounded monotonous and seemed to be right under his feet, obviously in the basement rooms.

Determined to get to the bottom of this, he went ahead. The corridor made a bend. As they went past the bend, they saw a thick steel door at the end of the corridor.

“Whoever wants to turn back now, this is your last chance,” he warned emphatically.

Bob toasted him. “Don’t talk nonsense, Juve! I want to know what’s going on here!”

The First Investigator shone through with his flashlight. Hesitantly and anxious not to make any noise, they approached the steel door. The monotonous rumble became louder from step to step. Jupiter was ready for anything.

When they reached the steel door, Pete examined it closely. “I’ll take any bet that our exploration ends here. Even with a lock pick, there’s nothing you can do. This is a sophisticated security lock.”

“Pessimism is inappropriate for detectives.” Jupiter held his breath and pushed down the heavy handle.

Surprisingly, the door opened and slowly swung to the side. The room in front was dark, only sparsely illuminated by a multitude of small lights.

In addition to the soft rumble, a quiet, regular beep was now heard. The First Investigator entered the room with excitement and let the flashlight wander. The walls and the floor were adorned with white tiles, which gave the room a sterile impression. Jupiter waved his colleagues and Mr Hanson towards him and closed the metal door behind them. As far as he

could see, there were no windows down there. So he could dare to operate the light switch next to the door. He pressed it with a soft click.

“Look at this!” With his mouth open, Bob pointed to the technical equipment and machines that occupied an entire wall of the room. Hundreds of vials, ampoules and cans, labelled with medical names, were packed into a display case next to a small trolley. On it lay scalpels, forceps and other surgical instruments.

“It looks like an operating room,” Pete remarked with discomfort. “I’m sure this is Professor Steed’s lab. Can somebody explain to me why he needs all these drugs?”

Meanwhile, Jupiter examined a high metal cabinet. But apart from a few cleaning rags, it was completely empty. Careful not to leave a trace, he closed it again when he discovered the access to a small room next to a stretcher. It was a small medical library. The bulging shelves arched under the weight of the books.

Bob, meanwhile, curiously walked to a white cuboid container placed at the back corner of the lab. From a distance it reminded him of the big open freezers at the supermarket. He looked over the edge and, surprised, let out a scream. The others held their breaths. There was an ominous silence, only the medical equipment boomed and beeped on and on.

Mike Hanson darted to the chest, closely followed by Jupiter, and stared into it with his eyes wide open. Jupiter felt a chill. Without a word, he waved Pete over.

“I knew it. This maniac has actually put his plan into action.” The First Investigator looked into the rigid face of Milva Summer. Her body was wrapped in aluminium foil. Only the left arm was exposed. Several tubes protruded from the arm vein.

Pete came hesitantly closer. “She’s dead, isn’t she?”

Jupiter reached out his hand and carefully touched her cheek. It was freezing cold. “There’s no doubt about it anymore,” he noted resignedly.

“Look at those hoses! They lead to this device here.” Bob pointed to a machine that was humming irregularly. “This must be the heart-lung machine the professor was talking about. It ensures that the brain is not damaged.”

“Step aside, boys! I’ll never get an opportunity like this again!” Without hesitation, the reporter reached for his camera and took photographs like crazy. He snapped the frozen body, took photos of the freezer and the lab.

Pete was visibly worried. “We should finally call the police. Think about our agreement. Professor Steed must be arrested immediately! He probably even caused Mrs Summer’s accident to collect the second half of the payment! That would be murder, and I don’t want anything to do with it! What do you think would happen if he surprised us here in the lab?”

At that moment, the light went off and the equipment fell silent. It became pitch dark—and dead silent.

Pete’s heart began to race. “Oh, no! What’s going on now?” He felt his way forward and pushed against the freezer. “Turn on the flashlight, Bob!” Panic-stricken, he clung to the person next to him.

Suddenly, they all startled in horror. Through the steel door they clearly heard footsteps approaching. “We’re trapped!” Mr Hanson managed to say with difficulty. “There’s no way to hide here!”

Jupiter reacted with presence of mind. “Come on!” He tore Bob’s flashlight from his hand and hurried ahead into the small adjoining room. Here he directed Pete, Bob and the reporter to the back corner and switched off the flashlight. At the same moment, the lab door was opened.

They noticed another flashlight flicker across the white tiles. Hectic footsteps were heard.

“No!... for goodness’ sake, no!” Some switches were flicked. Jupiter, Bob and Pete felt goose-bumps forming on their arms.

The voice clearly belonged to Professor Steed! He uttered some curses and was apparently tampering with a machine. Again switches were operated. “Come on, come on!”

His violent breathing could be heard in the adjoining room. Then he excitedly struck a metal object. “Those idiots!” Now beeps sounded. Apparently, the professor had a mobile phone with him. “Hello, is that the power company? ... I want to report a power outage. This is an emergency! Please put me through to someone!”

While waiting for the call connection, he opened cabinet doors, pushed a device to the side, groaning, and nervously drummed his fingers onto the table. Finally, the call went through.

“Listen! My lab is out of power! This is Professor Steed, 9 Walker Street, Westwood! Those miserable ‘Nuclear Power Opponents’ cut the electrical lines to my house. What? ... Yes! I saw them from my window. There was a forklift or something on the back of a van! ... No! You listen to me! My emergency power supply isn’t working! Only the devil knows why! ... I need power restored now! ... Listen! This is a matter of life and death! Come up with something, damn it!” As he walked, he left the lab and slammed the door behind him.

The three detectives and Mr Hanson were drenched in sweat.

They waited a moment until they dared to venture out of their hiding place carefully.

“We should finally call the police!” Pete repeated insistently. “This case is too hot!”

Jupiter switched on the flashlight and looked at the reporter questioningly. “Do you have a mobile phone with you?”

He nodded. “Yeah, it’s in my car, though.”

“What do we do now?” Pete’s face was filled with despair.

At that moment, the door of the lab was swung open! The professor stood threateningly in the door frame and shone his flashlight directly into their faces.

“Very clever! But I knew you three couldn’t be trusted! I presume this other gentleman is that ham from *Washington Globe Magazine*. I should have thought you’d team up with him right from the start! Everybody in the corner!”

They followed this request without resistance.

“The police are already looking for you,” Jupiter remarked seemingly calmly. “Within the next few minutes, your game will be over! Homicide will find out how you’re responsible for Mrs Summer’s death!”

“What are you talking about?” the professor exclaimed. “You have absolutely no idea!”

“You took advantage of Mrs Summer’s good faith and talked her into signing \$125,000 to you in the event of her death. We heard everything!” Bob was by no means intimidated.

“We don’t know how you did it with Mrs Summer’s cat, but the police will find out!” Jupiter confidently crossed his arms. “You’re a charlatan, Professor Steed! And probably a murderer, too! No one will believe that you can bring frozen people back to life!”

“Don’t you dare fool me!” Professor Steed grinned gloatingly. “Your intelligence leaves much to be desired anyway. The next time you hide in the next room, remember not to leave any traces!” He shone his flashlight on the stretcher. Mr Hanson’s camera bag was on it!

“Hold on a moment!” Bob suddenly exclaimed. “What’s that? Did you hear that?”

Professor Steed fell silent. A strange noise was heard from the darkness of the lab. It almost sounded like a fingernail scratching a rough object.

Jupiter tried hard to locate the source of these strange sounds. Slowly he let the cone of light from his flashlight glide through the lab, but he couldn’t find anything conspicuous.

Suddenly they heard a soft whimper. The First Investigator turned around in a flash and stopped motionless.

The strange noises came without a doubt from the freezer!

## 17. The Coins

The three detectives held their breath.

“For goodness’ sake!” Professor Steed pointed his light at the freezer and stared, bewildered. Then he rushed to the fuse box and excitedly operated various toggle switches. “The emergency generator!” he stammered. “The emergency generator!”

At that moment, the ceiling lighting came on again and all the technical equipment resumed operation. The professor hurriedly pushed Jupiter, Pete and Bob aside to adjust the rotary switch of the heart-lung machine. The First Investigator could not take his eyes off the freezer. Fascinated, he went one step closer. Next to the chest on the floor was a small puddle of water that was barely bigger than a child’s fist. It was about half a metre from the edge of the chest.

“Step aside, Jupiter!” Mr Hanson had taken his camera brazenly and took photos of the freezer, the professor and Mrs Summer.

The veterinarian plugged some cables while constantly casting restless glances into the chest. “The blackout caused the freezer to heat up,” he explained. “This should never have happened!”

“Look at that! Her arm is moving!” Bob could hardly believe it. Mrs Summer’s forearm began to tremble and twitch slightly.

“She lives...” Pete stammered. “It’s incredible... But she’s alive!”

Professor Steed waited until the heart-lung machine made an alarm whistle. Then he turned the switch off and removed the hoses from Mrs Summer’s arm vein.

“Stop taking photos,” he turned sharply to the reporter, “and help me lift her out of the chest! She has to be out of here! Grab her legs, I’ll grab her arms! We have to put her on the stretcher there!”

Mr Hanson took off his camera and did as he was told.

Professor Steed sweated and groaned, but finally they managed to get the shivering astrologer onto the stretcher. Some ice crystals lying on her body trickled to the ground.

“Cold... Cold,” it stammered across her lips. “Death... Accident...” Her teeth clapped against each other. “My cards... Fate...”

Professor Steed went to the foot of the stretcher, reached with both hands for the aluminium foil Mrs Summer was wrapped in, and gently pulled it from her body. “No photos now. Please! Then he put a thermal blanket over her.”

“This is incredible,” Mr Hanson muttered with fascination. “If I hadn’t seen it with my own eyes, I wouldn’t have thought it was possible. She was dead! Frozen!”

“We can’t let a word of this get out! You have to promise me that!” Professor Steed looked at the reporter. “These experiments are subject to the strictest secrecy! Later, when all the results have been evaluated, I promise your magazine an exclusive interview!”

“How did it go with Mrs Summer’s accident?” the reporter wanted to know. “The news reported that a doctor found her dead and then took her body. This doctor is you, Professor! How will you explain that to the court?”

“What do you mean by ‘court’?” asked the vet. “And what should I explain? I have done nothing wrong because I acted strictly by the book. I would have informed the police in due

course of Mrs Summer's location. The most important thing was to put her body in a cooling container immediately. That's what I had agreed in writing with Mrs Summer. It was her expressed wish. I couldn't ignore it."

"Do you do this sort of thing often?" Mr Hanson asked.

"The professor is specialized in freezing animals," Jupiter replied. "Mrs Summer was his first human test subject. He had negotiated a contract with her in which he assured her that he would put her on ice after her death in order to bring her back to life later."

"Which, contrary to expectations, he succeeded in doing," Bob stated. "How come you got there so fast after Mrs Summer's accident?"

Professor Steed glanced at the stretcher, on which the astrologer was still making whimpering noises.

"The abyss..." she stammered. "I don't want to die... A tunnel... My body loosens... I float through a tunnel... I want to come back..."

"We drove off her house together, but in separate cars," the professor continued. "As it so happens, we went the same route at first. In the mountains of Santa Monica, her car suddenly started to skid. It raced down the slope and crashed into a tree." He cleared his throat. "Mrs Summer drank a bottle of champagne earlier. I didn't want to let her drive alone, but she insisted, like a little child. When I retrieved her from the wreck, all I could find was her dead. The witnesses who arrived soon could confirm all this."

"What was the exact cause of death?" Mr Hanson drilled on.

"Heart failure," said the professor curtly. "Luckily, she was strapped in. The body didn't suffer any serious injuries, because then I wouldn't have been able to help her either. I immediately froze her and gave her my formula. There wouldn't have been anything else to do in another way. Every court will absolve me of guilt!"

"I think so too." The reporter was smiling admiringly at Professor Steed. "You will gain world fame! Mankind will lie at your feet and worship you like a god."

"And above all, stand in line to sign a contract with you, Professor." Jupiter looked him straight in the eye. "The prospect of a second life loosens many a wallet. When the *Washington Globe* publishes Mrs Summer's revival, you will hardly be able to cope with new clients. Many people will want to reserve a place in your ice chest after their death—whether you can produce scientific evidence or not! If only one percent of the American population is naïve enough to believe your results, you have it made and can comfortably settle abroad."

The professor turned red. "Watch your mouth, boy, or you'll get into trouble!"

Jupiter did not allow himself to be put off. "With every signature, \$62,500 is due. No matter when they die. If only one thousand people were to fall for your scam, your account would accumulate a lot of money—a pretty sum of 62.5 million dollars! It's a pity that this whole thing is a scam!"

Bob, Pete and Mr Hanson looked at the First Investigator in awe.

Jupiter obviously enjoyed the attention. "I sat on the line the whole time and let myself be dazzled by the fantastic events! I never dreamed that every word, every situation and every action had been agreed upon in advance!"

"Champagne..." muttered Mrs Summer, dazed. "The tarot... The cards of fate... 'Come In'..."

"Everything was a fake! It started with Mrs Summer hiring us to find her cat. She asked us to go to her house and had him placed in the bushes where he would certainly attract our attention. By chance, Mr Art was there to untie the cat from the bush. He must be involved in this plot. If he hadn't, he would have noticed from the body temperature and the weak heartbeat that the cat wasn't dead, only stunned."

“Stunned?” Bob asked. “What makes you say that?”

“Mrs Summer’s ensuing crying fit was played out very convincingly,” Jupiter continued. “Her tears would have convinced anyone that she was grieving the loss of her beloved cat. We’ve been fooled, haven’t we?”

“But when she asked us to come back a few days later and served us up the fairy tale of ‘Come In’s’ revival, a light should have come on me. Shortly, you—Professor Steed—conveniently appeared on the scene!”

## 18. The Fool

Pete frowned. "You'll have to explain that to us, Jupe."

"When the cat was treated by the professor in the fireplace room, I discovered a package in his case with the inscription 'Barbiturul'. I had read this name before, but for some unknown reason I did not get the direct connection. But when I was in the library next door, I helped my memory." The First Investigator went into the small adjoining room. When he returned, he held a medical reference book in his hands.

He leafed through it deliberately and opened a certain page. "'Barbiturul' is a powerful sedative that reduces the heartbeat and relaxes the muscles."

He gave the professor an accusing look. "How much of the drug did you have to administer to 'Come In' so that Mr Art could place him in the gorse bush?"

"You have a vivid imagination, young man." Professor Steed bare his teeth. "You should be a writer!"

Jupiter took note of this remark in silence.

"Even Mrs Summer's excellent presentation of the tarot cards, which repeatedly predicted her approaching death, served only the purpose of getting us in the mood for the following events and making us believe that she is a master in the field of interpreting the future.

"The five cards, which she laid on the table in front of us in the form of a pentagram and interpreted in a truly gloomy way, were guaranteed to be marked. 'The Hanged Man', 'Death', the two Sword cards and 'Judgement', are symbols of resurrection! Following that, the events could not have been more clearly pointed out. In my opinion, that required precise planning."

"Death... Lovers..." The astrologer seemed far away with her thoughts. "The revelation of the tarot..."

The First Investigator shook his head defensively. "But the production only really got going when Mrs Summer called *Washington Globe Magazine* and Mr Hanson got the hang of it. She announced a lucrative story to him on the phone and asked him to be at her home at 5 pm. But then she let us get rid of him via the intercom. However, Mr Hanson had so much to expect from the story that it seemed worthwhile for him to wait in front of her house to get to the story after all."

"Exactly so it was," the reporter confirmed. "I couldn't make sense of why Mrs Summer suddenly didn't want to see me anymore. It made it even more interesting for me."

"That, too, was firmly calculated," Jupiter continued. "While you, Mr Hanson, waited for them outside the gate, the two of them presented another piece of hogwash to us in the meantime—a conversation in which Professor Steed had Mrs Summer sign a death contract. The professor also didn't forget to mention the address of this lab—the place where she should be put on ice in the event of her death."

"Keep the story going, boy," rejoiced Professor Steed. "I'm curious to see where you end up."

"The whole thing was planned down to the last detail," Jupiter continued. "While Mrs Summer was drinking champagne with us, she was very skilful in getting us to lure the



reporter away from her house, or rather to pin him to our heels, so that she would have a clear path for further action—the staging of a car accident with a fatal outcome!”

“Wait a minute!” Pete interrupted the First Investigator’s lecture. “The disguise using the fur coat and sun hat was my idea. How could they have planned that in advance?”

“You just beat her to it, Pete,” Jupiter said. “Guaranteed she would have come to us with the same proposal. After all, this trick isn’t new.”

Bob shook his head without understanding. “I don’t believe it! And then Mrs Summer drove her car down the Santa Monica hillside?”

“Not her. Just her car,” corrected the First Investigator.

“I assume Professor Steed weighed down the accelerator with a stone. This allowed the car to bounce against the rock like a movie. The road is rarely used. So there was enough time to carry out this daring project without witnesses.”

“And what do you think went on?” Mr Hanson wanted to know.

“Mrs Summer lay down in the wreck and waited until the first witnesses arrived. As Professor Steed himself mentioned earlier, nobody had seen how this accident actually happened. The so-called witnesses could only reproduce what they were supposed to see. We already know the rest of the story from the radio.”

The vet didn’t pull a face.

“Well, Professor Steed, you and Mrs Summer have been waiting for us here in the lab. After all, our task in your plan was to lead the reporter from *Washington Globe Magazine* here. What mattered was that the revival event took place in front of witnesses and was to go public as soon as possible.”

The reporter looked at Jupiter questioningly. “Let’s say your theory is correct. Then how did this whole thing happen here in the lab?”

“Professor Steed waited until we discovered Mrs Summer in the freezer. Then he had the power cut off to initiate the grand finale, which he could only do in the dark.”

“You’re on the wrong track, boy!” Professor Steed walked slowly and threateningly toward Jupiter. “The blackout was caused by those ‘Nuclear Power Opponents’. You cut the wire with a bolt cutter!”

“Why would this happen while we’re down here in front of the frozen body? That’s a bit too much of a coincidence, don’t you think?” The First Investigator approached the freezer and pointed to the small puddle on the floor. “All this time I’ve been wondering how the water got in front of this chest. Because when we entered the lab, the spot was dry. I know that for a fact. The puddle must have formed between Professor Steed’s entry and leaving the lab.”

“What is this supposed to mean?” The veterinarian became visibly nervous and flashed Jupiter with cold eyes. “The power line in front of my house has been cut. You can see that for yourself.”

“That we believe you, Professor. I suppose Mr Art did a good job!” Jupiter relentlessly pointed to the puddle. “Won’t you finally tell us how the water got to the ground here?”

“I can’t explain it,” stammered Professor Steed. “Probably those are the melted ice crystals trickling from Mrs Summer’s body after I just lifted her out of the chest with Mr Hanson.”

The First Investigator remained stubborn. “The puddle was already on the ground before. And I can even prove it to you.”

Jupiter turned to the reporter and said: “Mr Hanson, could you kindly show us the photos you took here earlier? Perhaps you could present them in that computer over there.” Jupiter pointed to a computer on the table.

Mr Hanson nodded. "What photos are you looking for?"

"The area in front of the chest. With and without puddle!" The reporter took a cable from his camera bag and connected his camera to the computer. Then he sat down in front of the screen, clicked a few times with the mouse and after a short time the photos from the lab appeared on the monitor. On each of the photos, the date and the exact time of capture could be seen in the lower right corner.

The photos of Mrs Summer was lying in the freezer had something fascinating about them. But Jupiter's interest was exclusively in the shots showing the area in front of the chest. Clearly it was confirmed that the First Investigator had not been wrong.

"What was going on in the lab in the dark, professor?" he asked insistently. "Aren't you going to tell us? How did the puddle come about?"

Professor Steed scratched his head and flinched nervously at the corners of his mouth. "I don't know where you're going with this? You've got yourself a theory where you want to expose us as cheats with all your might. You're completely ignoring one fact."

"And what would that be?" Jupiter asked pointedly.

Professor Steed pointed to the freezer. "Mrs Summer was lying in that chest. She was dead. Frozen. The photos that Mr Hanson took prove that. You have clear proof!"

"And what do you think the photos would prove?"

"Several minutes have passed between the first and the last photo. If you're right about your theory that makes me look like a charlatan, please explain how Mrs Summer managed to stay in the freezer for so long and play a motionless and chilled corpse?"

Jupiter looked at the vet with his eyes wide open. Then he suddenly hit his forehead. "Of course! Now I know! I know how you did it!"

"What's it?" Professor Steed took a step back.

"Now it's perfectly clear to me what you two were doing here in the dark! Your vociferous argument with the power company had the sole purpose of concealing your actual actions! The noise you caused was not by switching on the technical equipment back again. In truth, the exchange has taken place during this time."

"What kind of exchange, Juve?" Bob looked at Jupiter questioningly.

"There was a doll in the freezer. While you talked loudly to the power company, Mrs Summer came into the lab and lifted the doll out of the freezer. When she set it up in a vertical position, the ice crystals trickled down and thawed immediately. Since it all happened in the dark, we couldn't see it, of course. It must have been that way and no other way!"

The astrologer hadn't made a sound in the last few minutes. She lay there with her eyes closed and breathed calmly and regularly.

"You should be examined for your state of mind, young man." Professor Steed was sweating all over his body. "Nobody's gonna buy this cobbled nonsense from you. Mrs Summer is still struggling with death. Nobody can guarantee she'll get through. I demand more respect!"

"Where did you hide the doll?" Jupiter pinched obsessively on his lower lip. "You didn't have much time left after all."

Searching, he let his eyes circle through the lab until he suddenly saw a high metal cabinet. He pointed at it. "What's in that cabinet?" he asked.

"Get your filthy paws off my cabinet!" The veterinarian grabbed a retort stand on a nearby table.

Pete rushed in from behind, grabbed the retort stand away and held the professor with a skilful karate grip.

Under loud protest of the professor Jupiter walked towards the cabinet and opened the door. In the cupboard was a lifelike doll with Milva Summer's face. The body was wrapped in aluminium foil.

Jupiter triumphed. "I still can't believe it—even though I have the final and unequivocal evidence before my eyes. All these efforts! This is insane. The doll was probably made by Mrs Summer's artist friend, who also designed the lifelike marble sculptures! That's incredible!"

Jupiter suddenly had to laugh and slowly walked towards the stretcher where the astrologer still remained motionless.

"You may rise, ma'am. Your acting skills are really ready for an Oscar. The script wasn't bad either, but quite unrealistic. Your lover, on the other hand, should rather be given only a supporting role next time. His role as a brilliant scientist who tricked death was, in my opinion, a bit too exaggerated. A little more can be too much sometimes."

Mr Hanson detached the computer connection cable from his camera and photographed the doll from various positions. Then he turned to Jupiter. "If you can also explain to me now what the lover means. The readers of the *Washington Globe Magazine* will swarm like locusts over my article. This is gonna be the scoop of the year!"

The First Investigator grinned, pulled a photo out of the shirt pocket and pressed it into the reporter's hand. "I found this in Mrs Summer's collection of newspaper reports. She forgot to remove this particular photo. Look at this."

Mr Hanson looked at the photograph with a smile on his face. It showed a younger Mrs Summer at a party full of atmosphere. She was embracing a man whose conspicuously large nose left no doubt as to who he was—Professor Steed!

Slowly the astrologer opened her eyes. "I'm freezing, you snoopers. Where'd you leave my fur coat? And then bring me a glass of champagne!"

Jupiter stood next to the stretcher with Mrs Summer. "You've been entertaining us the last few days, ma'am. We have learned a lot and I have to admit that my partners and I have never met anybody like you before."

"We will of course continue to maintain absolute discretion, as you have commissioned us as detectives to handle this case. But you'll have to negotiate with Mr Hanson yourself. You called him regarding a lucrative story and now you've finally met him, and gave him the story. I can't imagine, however, that he will let this delicacy escape him!"

Jupiter continued: "One more thing, Mrs Summer—this is something important to us. You hired us, The Three Investigators, to find the person who attacked your cuddly cat. Not only we identified him, but we also have him here right now."

"Oh, yes," Bob added. "There's still one more thing. We will duly inform the ASPCA to investigate the harm done to 'Come In' and have them take action against the perpetrator."

Mr Hanson then took the stage with his camera. "Bob, could you please get the doll out of the cabinet and hold it next to Mrs Summer. Join in, boys. And now, nice and friendly..."

The First Investigator gently nudged Mrs Summer on the shoulder. "The press is waiting, ma'am. Don't you think you should make yourself ready for the photo? I don't mean to be rude, but right now, you look like a corpse!"